



“THE NIGGER”



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TORONTO

“THE NIGGER”

An American Play in Three Acts

BY

EDWARD SHELDON

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THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1910

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THE NEW THE TRE

THE NIGGER

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS BY
EDWARD SHELDON

PRODUCED BY GEORGE FOSTER PLATT

SCENES

ACT FIRST

JUNE 3D. EVENING AT "MORROW'S REST."

INTERMISSION—FIFTEEN MINUTES

ACT SECOND

APRIL 23D. THE GOVERNOR'S STUDY IN HIS CITY HOUSE.
ABOUT TEN O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING.

ACT THIRD

APRIL 26TH. THE GOVERNOR'S PRIVATE OFFICE AT THE
CAPITOL. EVENING.

PLACE: THE SOUTH. TIME: NOW.

CHARACTERS

NAMED IN THE ORDER OF THEIR APPEARANCE

SIMMS, <i>Morrow's butler</i>	MR. REGINALD BARLOW
JINNY, <i>Morrow's "mammy"</i>	MISS BEVERLY SITGREAVES
CLIFTON NOYES, <i>president of the Noyes Distillery Works</i>	MR. BEN JOHNSON
GEORGIANA BYRD	MISS ANNIE RUSSELL
PHILIP MORROW, <i>of "Morrow's Rest" and sheriff of Westbury County</i>	MR. GUY BATES POST
PURDY, <i>deputy sheriff of Westbury County</i>	MR. ROBERT E. HOMANS
MRS. BYRD	MR. H. OTIS DELLENBAUGH
JOE WHITE	MR. OSWALD YORKE
JAKE WILLIS	MR. PEDRO DE CORDOBA
BARRINGTON, <i>the Governor's private secretary</i>	MR. JACOB WENDELL, JR.
CHIEF-OF-POLICE TILTON	MR. WILFRID NORTH
COLONEL KNAPP, <i>of the 5th Militia</i>	MR. WILLIAM MCVAY
THE GOVERNOR'S DOORKEEPER	MR. ROBERT VIVIAN
SENATOR THOMAS R. LONG	MR. LEE BAKER
MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNOR'S STAFF, REPORTERS, ETC.	

First Production December 4, 1909



ACT I

JUNE 3D — Twilight at “Morrow’s Rest.”

ACT II

FEBRUARY 23D — The Governor’s study in his city house; about ten o’clock in the morning.

ACT III

FEBRUARY 26TH — The Governor’s private office at the Capitol; afternoon.

PLACE — THE SOUTH.

TIME — Now.

CHARACTERS

PHILIP MORROW, *of "Morrow's Rest," and Sheriff of Westbury County*

CLIFTON NOYES, *President of the Noyes Distillery Works*

SENATOR THOMAS R. LONG

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CHIEF-OF-POLICE TILTON

THE GOVERNOR'S DOORKEEPER

SIMMS, *Morrow's butler*

JOE WHITE

MRS. BYRD

GEORGIANA BYRD

JINNY, *Morrow's "Mammy"*

Officers of the Militia, newspaper men, members of the State Legislature, farmers of Westbury County, rioting citizens, newsboys, etc.



ACT I

Evening at "Morrow's Rest" — June 3rd.

At the right, half facing the audience, extends the façade of an old-fashioned Southern colonial mansion. It is built of white frame, two-storied, with four great white Doric columns going up from the rather narrow veranda to the pediment above. A flight of four or five steps, flanked on each side by a carriage block the height of the veranda, leads up to the front door. On either side of the door, at regular intervals, are long French windows, with green shutters folded back. At present the curtains are practically drawn, but the glow of the lamplight within can be seen.

A luxuriant honeysuckle vine shuts off the side view of the house. Crimson ramblers riot round the base of the veranda, so that the house itself seems to rise from them. Coming up to the steps is a carriage drive, which terminates with the footlights; going in the other direction, it turns and is lost to view amid the evergreens and shrubbery on either side. Along the back are more flowering shrubs and beyond them a hedge of box. There is a sudden depression beyond this, indicating that the house stands upon a slight rise. The tops of trees can be seen.

At the left is another hedge, almost concealed by shrubs and magnolia trees in full bloom. Between this hedge

and the carriage drive is a plot of smoothly clipped turf, which occupies the centre of the stage. In this, towards the left, rises a magnificent live-oak, with an old twisted trunk. Under it are a garden bench, a small table on which are a coffee tray and several scattered cups, and two small chairs, in some confusion. To the right of this, bordering the carriage drive, are several white rose-bushes. It is just after sunset; the lights are dim and rosy, casting violet shadows. As the act progresses, the western sky, seen at back over tree-tops, fades from rose to a clear pale green, and one or two stars appear. Then, almost imperceptibly, the moonlight filters through the trees, checkering the façade of the old house with light and shade. The whole scene is impregnated with ancient and ordered beauty, peaceful charm. As the curtain rises the stage is empty for a moment. From the drawing-room within can be heard a girl's voice singing Schubert's "Du bist die Rühe," with the piano accompaniment; it continues throughout the following scene.

Simms, the old butler, comes creakily out the front door and down the steps. He is a gray-haired, bow-legged old negro, in an ill-fitting dress suit and white cotton gloves. His walk and manner are haughty. He shuffles across the driveway to the table under the live-oak, puts the four coffee-cups upon the tray, and turns back to the house with the whole affair.

Meanwhile Jinny, an ancient quadroon woman, tall, gaunt, neatly dressed, has come silently up the driveway, between the shrubberies, and suddenly appears to Simms.

JINNY.

My Joe bin roun' heah ?

SIMMS.

Startled, the coffee-cups rattling.

Who dat ?

JINNY.

Coming forward.

My Joe bin roun' heah ? I cain't fin' him nowheres t'-night.

SIMMS.

Recovering himself and speaking angrily.

Sho', Jinny ! W'erefo' yo' come up en' try t' scar' me lak dis ? Yo' mos' make me drop mah tray !

JINNY.

Joe ain't come home fo' suppah en' I thought yo' mighta seed him 'bout the house.

SIMMS.

Angrily.

Clar' t' goodness, wish I had ! W'en that thar niggah comes heah agin, I'se gwine t' brek his haid ! Dat I am ! Nevah brought in no wood all day. I sen' out 'Liza t' do 't en' she say 'tain't her wuhk, en' all de niggahs in de house ain't done finish fightin' en' talkin' — jes' 'kaze dat black debbil done run off t' de saloom !

JINNY.

Wearily.

I speck yo' right. Hev yo' got suthin' fo' me t'-night ? Seems lak I might take it down wif me t' de cabin.

SIMMS.

Grumbling.

Fo' dat young good-fo'-nuffin hawg-grubbah t' swallow w'en he done come home ? Laws me, w'y Marse Phil 'lows his fried chicken en' co'n-braid t' feed dat wo'thless rap-scallion, I jes' cain't see ! Clar out o' heah, yo' orn'ry yallah gal !

JINNY.

Crushingly.

Yallah gal — ! Sho' ! I was livin' heah fo' yo' was bawn ! Don' fo'get dat, yo' imperent, low-down li'tle niggah yo' !

SIMMS.

Pacifically.

Hol' on, Jinny ! I ain't said nuffin'. Dat I ain't ! Yo' g' long now en' I'll sen' down a gal t' yo' cabin wif a basket.

JINNY.

Turning away.

Yo' sho' will — er Marse Phil 'd —

SIMMS

As he goes up the steps.

En' keep yo' gran'chillun out dat saloom, Jinny, ef yo' don' want t' see 'em cross de Jo'dan ahead o' yo' ! Dat Joe ! Lawd-a-massy ! De white in him ain't done nobody no good 's fah's dis — 'Scuse me, sah !

He stops suddenly and turns aside, bowing, on seeing Noyes and Georgie, who have opened the door and come out.

GEORGIE.

A lovely young girl in a charmingly simple white evening frock.

Oh, smell the honeysuckle !

Drawing in a deep breath as she gazes about.

How lovely it is after the rain !

She stands on the top step, looking off into the twilight.

Simms disappears inside.

She sees Jinny, who has turned away.

Is that you, mammy ? Good evening !

JINNY.

In her lifeless voice.

'Evenin', Miss Geo'gie.

NOYES.

Rather patronizingly.

How are you, mammy ?

JINNY.

Trailing along the carriage drive and disappearing.

Tol'able, suh, tol'able, thank yo' —

NOYES.

Phil's mammy?

GEORGIE.

Yes, and his father's befo' him. She's been heah longer than any one else — she goes back to the time of Phil's grandfathah. Why, she must be a hundred now — and she hasn't changed a bit since I was a little girl and used to be ovah heah so much!

NOYES.

Now I remembah! — Jinny — oh, yes.

He seems thoughtful; then, with a slight effort.

Phil's mighty good to her, ain't he?

GEORGIE.

Smiling.

He adores her — goes down to her cabin and talks to her all the time! I believe she has a grandson who gives her a lot of trouble. — Oh, Phil's wonderful with *all* his da'kies! — Isn't that a whippo'-will?

She listens.

NOYES.

He mus' have 'bout six hundred — eh? Well, I reckon he thinks treatin' his niggahs good brings up the total o' his cotton crop! Theah's some-thin' in it!

GEORGIE.

Coldly.

I don't think he's kind to them fo' that. — Let's go down.

She descends the steps, followed by Noyes. He is a huge, lumbering, determined-looking man with a hard mouth and chin. With men, he shows his keen, close-mouthed, aggressive business mind; with women, he is quite lacking in ease and assurance. He is in evening dress, with diamond studs, and his collar secretly annoys him.

Georgie crosses to one of the chairs under the live-oak tree and sits down, her back to the house. Then she speaks to him without turning around.

Mr. Noyes?

NOYES.

Shifting his quid and choking a little.

Yes'm.

GEORGIE.

Yo' — chewing again. I want you to stop when yo' talking to me at least. I didn't think I'd have to mention it twice.

NOYES.

Guiltily.

Jes' a little — while you were singin' — I tried not t' let any one notice —

GEORGIE.

Interrupting.

I'm going to sit with my back to you fo' a moment, and then — well, I never expect to see you do it again!

Noyes goes quickly to the driveway and comes back wiping his mouth with his handkerchief. He takes a chair facing her and the house, and sits down carefully.

Still with dignity.

Thank you.

NOYES.

Please fo'give me, Miss Byrd. But when a man's been chewin' fo' twenty yeahs, he feels kind o' lonesome without —

Hastily.

I hope you won' think any less of me, b'cause
I'm — well, you know!

GEORGIE.

If I didn't like you, do you think I'd refer to —
yo' habits?

*She frowns a bit, then looks up at him with a resolute
little smile.*

We won't mention it any mo', please.—Now what
was it you wanted to speak to me about?

NOYES.

Theah's no hurry — that is, you sound so't o'
business-like. It's not *'xactly* business — least-
wise mos' people don' —

GEORGIE.

Smiling.

I thought you were a business man and liked to
get at things quickly.

NOYES.

Uncomfortably.

Not some things. It takes time fo' some things!
An' I haven't had a jiffy alone with you all day!

GEORGIE.

Well, this is the last chance you'll get.

Glancing over her shoulder.

When Phil and mothah finish talking about that investment of hers, I'm afraid you'll —

NOYES.

Yo' mothah don' stand fo' me, does she? Freezes right up whenever I say a wo'd! The only thing we agree on is niggahs!

GEORGIE.

Idly.

Do you?

NOYES.

And yet, this afte'noon, when you an' Phil were out drivin', and I'd gone through the attic fo' those papahs I'm lookin' fo', I came out heah where Mis' Byrd was settin' an' cussed the niggahs good's I could! I hadn't hardly begun, b'fo' I found — well, I was a-talkin' to myself!

GEORGIE.

Trying to be tactful.

Mothah is — a little difficult with people she doesn't know well. She's apt to carry old prejudices.

NOYES.

What's that?

GEORGIE.

You know we used to own Rive'view ovah theah befo' we moved in town,—the Jennings' place, just next to Phil's. So mothah has naturally had the old Morrow point of view—about—

She stops, undecided.

NOYES.

'Bout the Noyes side o' the family? I reckon I understand.

He smiles grimly.

GEORGIE.

Hastily.

Of co'se that's all ovah now. You and Phil are good friends, aren't you? You weren't foolish enough to keep up that feud, simply because yo' fathah —

She hesitates.

NOYES.

My fathah? Yes, he gave way t' his comme'cial ambition by sellin' powdah an' bullets t' the

Union — way back in '62. That got him into a bunch o' trouble, but it wasn't what *sta'ted* the — slight fam'ly coolness!

GEORGIE.

Wasn't it? Why, I always hea'd —

NOYES.

No, it came befo' that. My gran'fathah an' Phil's — they were brothahs-in-law, you know — they began it in the fo'ties.

GEORGIE.

Why?

NOYES.

Grimly.

I reckon the Morrows are tryin' now t' keep it da'k. But Lawd! — I don't mind tellin'. It's the old thing — both losin' theah heads ovah the same woman.

GEORGIE.

Innocently.

How romantic! Phil's gran'mothah?

NOYES.

After a pause.

No — niggah woman.

GEORGIE.

In a low voice, turning away.

Oh — I didn't — realize —

NOYES.

Clearing his throat.

Phil's gran'fathah — he won out. An' that's the kick that sta'ted the Noyes fam'ly a-rollin' t' pe'dition.

GEORGIE.

With difficulty.

But mos' people are willing to fo'get — at least they ought to be.

NOYES.

Dryly.

Some ain't killed 'emselves tryin'. Howevah, on lookin' ahead I saw Phil an' I might be in a position t' help each othah, so we agreed t' sink it. I — I wish yo' mothah would follow Phil, Miss Byrd. I ce'tainly do wish that!

GEORGIE.

She's old-fashioned — oh, hopelessly so! — in things the world now considers — trivial.

NOYES.

Looking at his hands.

Such as — trade?

GEORGIE.

Gently.

That's one of them.

NOYES.

Ain't I as well bawn as Phil? We come from the same stock. Why only this afte'noon I found the papahs up in the attic that'll make me a Son o' the Revolution! How's that?

GEORGIE.

Hailing the interruption.

Oh, you *did* get them, then? Phil said he knew they were theah, if you hunted long enough in those old trunks!

NOYES.

Yes, I got 'em.

He suddenly becomes preoccupied.

GEORGIE.

Easily.

Phil and I meant to be home early enough to help you, and then the thunde'-sto'm came up, and you

see we *had* to wait ovah at Jake Willis's fa'm till it cleared off. Really, I was awfully sorry — rummaging round in attics is *such* fun — you nevah can tell what you'll find!

NOYES.

Who is looking down.

That's so.*

GEORGIE.

Running on.

And I thought it nevah would stop raining. Mamie Willis — she's the youngest daughtah, you know, a right sweet little thing! did her best to entertain me while Phil and her fathah talked about the negro question, *of co'se*. She gave me new recipes fo' brandied peaches and pickled wate'melon, and I explained the latest thing in skirts. It was mighty nice!

NOYES.

Miss Byrd.

GEORGIE.

On her guard.

Well?

NOYES.

I didn't come out heah t' have you tell me 'bout pickled wate'melons. I got somethin' to tell *you*! I came out from the city t'-day on pu'pose to do it.

GEORGIE.

Seeing we sail fo' Europe on Thu'sday, you took — well, the last train, didn't you?

NOYES.

Wiping his forehead.

Miss Byrd — it's this way. I've met you — off an' on — heah at Phil's an' in the city — fo' nigh onto fo' yeahs — an' — well —

GEORGIE.

Leaning forward and speaking kindly.

Please don't go on, Mr. Noyes. I — I wouldn't have come out if I'd realized you meant to — I'm sorry, but it's no use.

NOYES.

You know what I want?

GEORGIE.

You were going to ask me — to —

NOYES.

Marry me. That's it!

GEORGIE.

Thank you, but — I'm afraid it's quite impossible.

NOYES.

I don't see why.

GEORGIE.

Firmly.

Absolutely impossible, Mr. Noyes. I think I'll —

She half rises.

NOYES.

Commandingly.

No — wait! What hey you got against me?

GEORGIE.

I? Nothing — of co'se —

NOYES.

Why don' you like me?

GEORGIE.

I *do* like you.

NOYES.

Then why won' you marry me? I'd make you a right good husband, I reckon, if you was to take me in hand.

GEORGIE.

I'm afraid I can't —

She again tries to rise.

NOYES.

Firmly and calmly.

I've made a fair proposition an' if you tu'n it down, I reckon you'll give yo' reasons. That's business!

GEORGIE.

Oh — business!

NOYES.

Good business — that is.

GEORGIE.

Amused.

If it's a mattah of business, then, and as I — like you, I don't see any reason aftah all why I shouldn't.

NOYES.

Go ahead.

GEORGIE.

Well, fo' one thing, I shouldn't care to feel that my husband made his money in whiskey.

NOYES.

Why not? It's honest, ain't it?

GEORGIE.

Pe'factly so. Oh, I'm merely prejudiced — that's all. But you insisted on reasons.

NOYES.

Grimly.

Any mo'? Go on! . . . Give me a chance to know why I don't toe the mahk.

GEORGIE.

I know you've wuhked ha'd, been mighty busy all yo' life. I know you can't be blamed — fo' missing a great deal that —

NOYES.

Well?

GEORGIE.

That counts a lot to any girl brought up as I've been.

There is a little pause.

NOYES.

I s'pose you mean I'm not yo' idea of a gentleman.

There is another slight pause.

Well, I'm not. I ain't had time.

GEORGIE.

Uncomfortably.

Now don't make it ha'd fo' me, Mr. Noyes.

NOYES.

So you don' like the Noyes Distillery Wuhks — eh? Not high-toned enough to suit yo' aristocratic raisin'?

He rises and walks about.

GEORGIE.

Apologetically.

You know the old feeling down heah — surely you've met it!

NOYES.

With a short laugh.

Oh, I've met it all right!

Facing her.

Miss Geo'gie — I s'pose I can call you that, can't I, aftah you've tu'ned me down?

GEORGIE.

Not looking at him.

Please go on.

NOYES.

Miss Geo'gie, I sta'ted in at ten yeahs old, with nothin' at all — 'cep' my fathah's debts. I had t' wuhk — an' wuhk mighty ha'd, I can tell you, t' keep alive !

GEORGIE.

I know, Mr. Noyes, I know.

NOYES.

I didn't bothah t' get much b'yond a livin'. I said to myself, " What you want now is a bank account ! The polishin' can wait !" Unde'stan' ?

GEORGIE.

Uncomfortably.

I think so.

NOYES.

Well, I looked round fo' a good beginnin' — a demand that was goin' t' last. It didn't take me long t' see the *wo'ld needs liquoh* — an' ev'ry bottle it drinks 's wo'th money in somebody's pocket !

Why shouldn't somebody be me? If men 'll sta've themselves an' all their fam'lies t' get a drink — why, it goes to prove that whiskey is a prime investment! No dangah o' gingah ale nor sa'sparilla evah takin' its place!

GEORGIE.

Absolutely none!

NOYES.

So I've spent my life in these heah distilleries. I take pride in sayin' they're mighty close t' bein' the best in the South. Evah been ovah them? — No? — Well, sometime I'll take you. An' you shouldn't think any the wuss o' me, Miss Geo'gie, b'cause I picked out the mos' payin' business I could fin' an' slaved like a niggah t' make it pay mo'!

GEORGIE.

Lightly.

Yo' the mode'n man, Mr. Noyes. You have the new wo'l'd on yo' side!

NOYES.

I've had to fight my way. *I* didn't step into a thousan'-acre cotton plantation — like Phil heah

— with nothin' t' do but ride a hoss round all mawnin' an' sign checks all aftahnoon! If Phil had sta'ted in with nuthin', d' you think he'd be where he is now? I reckon not!

GEORGIE.

Quickly.

That isn't fair! Of co'se he would! He's doubled his income in fifteen yeahs — he's made this the show place of the State! And he's got all the rest, too! Didn't he go to college when he was twenty-five and give up his racing and idleness — just because he came to realize the value of an education? Isn't he sheriff of this county? Isn't he looked up to and admired by every man in the State as the best the South can offer? If you spent a little mo' time followin' his —

She suddenly realizes she has been speaking too earnestly, and breaks off, looking away.

NOYES.

Softly.

I reckon I see! The only claim I got on yo' affections, Miss Geo'gie, comes through my bein' Phil's cousin! Well, that's sho'ly one on me!

GEORGIE.

I think you put it rathah disagreeably, Mr. Noyes.

NOYES.

Phil — !

He laughs silently.

Comin' young statesman, ownah o' "Morrow's Rest," old type o' the Southern gen'leman — in sho't — the pu'fect man ! That it ?

GEORGIE.

I don't see anything to laugh at.

NOYES.

Still amused.

O' co'se ! — o' co'se ! An' yet — you know — I jes' can't help it !

GEORGIE.

If yo' tryin' to make fun of Phil —

She rises.

NOYES.

Rising and sobering down.

Miss Geo'gie, yo' plum' right. I ain't the man fo' you. P'raps it might hev tu'ned out you weren't

the gal fo' me! We'll call it square — shake on it!

He offers his hand, which she, smiling a little, takes.

GEORGIE.

Don't mention it, Mr. Noyes.

NOYES.

I won't — again. But theah's somethin' else. I came down heah t'-day t' kill two jack-rabbits with one shot!

GEORGIE.

Smiling.

Thanks. Who's the — othah?

NOYES.

Phil. I've been sent out by my frien', Bill Watson. Evah heah o' Bill Watson?

GEORGIE.

Hasn't he a good deal to do with politics?

NOYES.

You sho'ly put it mild, Miss Geo'gie! He's our Democratic State boss, an', fust an' last, he owns

the whole machine. Backed up, that is, by a few of us — whiskey-sellahs an' the like.

GEORGIE.

Yes — but what's this got to do with Phil?

NOYES.

We think Phil might make a fairly acceptable nominee fo' Gove'noh in the comin' convention.

GEORGIE.

In delight.

Gove'noh?

NOYES.

If he was int'rested — that is.

GEORGIE.

Oh, how — wonde'ful !

NOYES.

You see, Phil's fam'ly an' his place, his wuhk as sheriff o' this county — he's got a clean reco'd, an' that counts like the devil nowadays. He's mighty populah, is Phil, an' he hates niggahs. These are the two points in his favah, Miss Geo'gie.

GEORGIE.

Have you told him yet?

NOYES.

No, but —

GEORGIE.

A flame.

Wait heah! I'll send him out!

Turning back, her hands clasped, and smiling.

Oh, you are nice — aftah all!

She runs up the steps and into the house.

Noyes, as soon as she is gone, pulls his plug from his pocket and takes a bite. Then, his brow contracting, he walks back and forth for a moment, chewing.

Phil appears at the door; he is a tall, dark, slender young man of about thirty-five, with a well-built, boyish figure. His manner is full of the old Southern charm, his voice is usually a musical drawl, but he shows the possibilities of fire beneath. He wears a dinner jacket.

PHIL.

You want to see me out heah, Clif?

At the sound of his voice Noyes starts a little, then turns.



ACT I]

THE NIGGER

31

NOYES.

Yes. Theah's somethin' I'd like to —

PHIL.

Coming down the steps.

Have another cigah?

Offering him his case.

NOYES.

Thanks, I'm — othahwise employed.

PHIL.

Shrugging his shoulders, as he lights his own cigar.

Excuse me — I couldn't see.

NOYES.

Clearing his throat.

Well, I've been given the mit good an' ha'd!

PHIL.

You've been — ?

NOYES.

His thumb in the direction of the house.

She did the trick as easy as I'd kick a niggah downstairs!

PHIL.

Sitting down.

Really?

NOYES.

Carelessly.

I also have a suspicion that she'd heard some-
thin' —

Suddenly facing Phil.

You nevah told her 'bout me an' that mulatto
gal, did you?

PHIL.

Annoyed.

That's ha'dly the thing I would mention to a lady,
Clif.

NOYES.

Well, I reckon she knew — jus' the same. I could
feel it in the air!

PHIL.

I've told you if you did that so't o' thing no white
woman would touch you with a ten-ya'd pole!

NOYES.

Savagely.

Gettin' pa'ticulah, are they? Well, they didn't

seem t' mind back theah when the yallah gals lived undah the same roof with 'em !

PHIL.

They do now, though. All of us mind — or ought to. By God, Clif, it's a crime — it's demo'alizin' the South ! Things have changed some since the wah, an' if we want t' keep our blood clean, we've got to know that *white's white* an' *black's black* — an' mixin' 'em's damnation !

NOYES.

Sneeringly.

Oh, I know yo' pu'fect !

He reflects, then laughs harshly.

But that's mo' than yo' family was ! I don' see why a Morrow need stick up his nose at me !

PHIL.

Holly.

It was different befo' the wah — an' anyway that's old women's gossip about my gran'fathah. Not a wo'd o' truth in it !

NOYES.

Why, it was the talk o' the county fo' twenty-five yeahs ! Only this afte'noon, when I was huntin'

fo' the Revolutionary papahs, I ran across a lettah written to yo' precious ancestoh by a niggah woman, — the same one, I reckon, that bust up our fam'ly !

PHIL.

Coldly.

When I told you you could look ovah those old trunks, I didn't expect you —

He stops.

But I reckon it's my own fault !

NOYES.

Impatiently.

Oh, hell ! Why, it was written way back in the fo'ties ! Cha'min' little souvenir — eh ? Evah been through those ol' trunks ?

PHIL.

No.

NOYES.

It might have been wo'th yo' while, Phil, my boy : it might have been wo'th yo' while !

He chuckles to himself.

Now don't you get uppish 'bout me an' my habits

— jes' remembah yo' deah ol' gran'fathah an' choke it off ! Unde'stan' ?

He chuckles again.

PHIL.

Angrily.

Damn it, he's in his grave these sixty yeahs ! Whatevah he did, it's all ovah now — and that's an end to it !

NOYES.

Oh — not necessarily !

PHIL.

Of co'se it is !

NOYES.

Sitting down carefully, as a large man does.

I always think these heah ga'den chairs 's goin' t' collapse when I — theah I am !

Resuming the subject.

You know the results of yo' po' ol' gran'fathah's foolishness might be — on deck now ?

PHIL.

Results ?

NOYES.

Chuckling.

Haven't discovered any — *dahk* relations anywheres about, hev you, Phil ?

PHIL.

After a brief pause.

What a filthy mind you have, Clif !

With emphasis.

Now we'll drop the subject — unde'stand ? I'm tired of it !

NOYES.

Jes' as you say, Phil, — Oh, one thing mo' ! What so't of a woman was yo' gran'mothah ?

PHIL.

How should I know ? She died when my fathah was bawn.

NOYES.

Oh, she died when yo' fathah was bawn, did she ? Well, wasn't that too bad !

PHIL.

Her po'trait's in the dining-room — ovah the fireplace, jus' next to gran'fathah. Why the devil are you asking all these questions ?

NOYES.

Nothin'. Jes' natural int'rest in fam'ly hist'ry. That's all, Phil.

Leaning back in his chair, his thumbs in his waistcoat.

Well, Miss Geo'gie ce'tainly tu'ned me down ha'd, an' I got an idea —

He pauses.

PHIL.

Bored.

Is *this* all you want to see me about?

NOYES.

Continuing.

That she's really waitin' fo' some one else t' step up an' take a chance.

He studies a diamond solitaire.

PHIL.

Coldly, after a brief pause.

Let's get down to business, Clif, — if theah is any. I think Miss Byrd said that —

NOYES.

Bringing down his chair and suddenly assuming his regular business manner.

All right — I'm with you. In the September convention we want t' run you fo' Gove'noh. How about it?

PHIL.

Taking out his cigar and leaning forward.

Me?

NOYES.

Yes, you. Now listen. De Voy's goin' t' put up Thomas R. Long on a prohibition platfo'm an' —

PHIL.

Amazed.

Senatoh Long fo' Gove'noh? The man that has da'kies at his dinnah-table? Why, you don't mean "The White Niggah"?

NOYES.

That's him! But he ain't got the ghost of a show! — you know 't 's well 's me. He's a renegade to dirty Republicanism — on ev'ry question of impo'tance he flies in his pa'ty's face! Why, suh, at heart he's a regulah Abe Lincoln!

PHIL.

Eighty per cent Prohibitionist — twenty per cent Socialist — you accuse him of Republicanism — and he calls himself a Democrat! Good Lawd!

NOYES.

Evah seen the ol' skunk?

PHIL.

Smiling.

Not yet.

NOYES.

Congratulations!

PHIL.

“The White Niggah!” How in God’s name is he going to get the nomination?

NOYES.

He’s got it. Hypnotized De Voy, I reckon! An’ then he’s backed up by Carter an’ Wells. They mus’ be crazy! But this State’s gettin’ tired o’ po’ white trash fo’ gove’nohs — doodle-blowers like this heah Long! The people think they’re as good as the man on top, which ain’t a healthy nor a natural feelin’. What they want is one o’ the ol’-timahs, so they can say, “Well, aftah all, he’s a *gen’leman!*”

PHIL.

Will Long keep up his prohibition platfo’m — niggah vote — and all that rot?

NOYES.

Chuckling.

He ce'tainly will ! An' that's where we got him. Ev'ry one's wise to how *you* feel on the niggah question — Lawd knows you've written and talked enough !

PHIL.

But —

NOYES.

Yo' the very man we're aftah to carry this convention with a whoop ! I own the la'gest Democratic newspapah in the State, an' it'll back you good. Why, I reckon the *Courant* could elect a ten-months-old baby ! Billy Watson's wild to get you — he an' I are stuck tight fo' a lot o' reasons, prohibition's the biggest — an' togethah we can fai'ly promise you the office. Oh, it'll be a walk-away ! How's that ?

PHIL.

Hold on !

Curiously.

Seems like yo' mighty keen to run me in. Yo' not the man who does somethin' fo' nothin', Clif. What's yo' little game ?

NOYES.

Frankly.

I'll be straight with you, Phil. If by any chance Long should get in an' this State go dry — well, that would be the end o' me an' the Noyes Distillery Wuhks. When I think o' the yeahs I spent — (*he clinches his hands with terrible determination*) it's so't o' plain, ain't it?

PHIL.

Nodding.

Of co'se.

NOYES.

But yo' not a prohibitionist, thank God an' yo' ability to make a julep !

PHIL.

Guardedly.

I've always believed that ev'ry man should be able to drink what he wants —

NOYES.

So we're safe with you !

PHIL.

Sternly.

Clif, this sounds to me mighty like a —

NOYES.

Well, Phil?

PHIL.

Firmly.

A bribe. Now you ought by this time to know I'm not the kind of man to —

NOYES.

Come down — come down! Are we tryin' to make a swap with you? Are we goin' t' hold you down t' anythin' at all? Not a damn bit of it! We know you an' we rely on yo' good sense. That's all. Now does that sound like bribin' an' graftin'? 'Cause if it does, I want to know!

PHIL.

Still rather sternly.

It's perfectly true, I don't believe in prohibition, but if I did, I —

NOYES.

Soothingly.

O' co'se you don't! Yo' a right-minded man, Phil, so you jes' naturally can't!

PHIL.

Quietly.

And while I'm good to my niggahs — I reckon that's a well-known fact, too! — I don't think they ought to have the franchise and I won't treat 'em as equals.

NOYES.

Sho' you won't! An' the niggahs need drink t' make 'em know their place. If they couldn't spen' their wages in liquoh, d'you think they'd keep on wukhin'? Not much! An' *then* where'd we be?

PHIL.

Smiling in spite of himself.

That's yo' own way of putting it, Clif.

NOYES.

Rising.

Well, then, can I 'phone a wire to Billy Watson, sayin' the ol' State's goin' t' get the man she needs?

PHIL.

Rising.

I wondah if I ought to!

He is deeply moved.

GEORGIE.

Appearing at the door of the house and standing at the head of the steps.

Have you told him, Mr. Noyes? I *couldn't* wait — !

NOYES.

Oh, he's on, but —

GEORGIE.

Running down the steps joyously.

Oh, Phil, I'm *so* delighted! I *wish* we weren't going to Europe — it would be so — so exciting to stay heah and watch you fight! Isn't it *splendid*?

PHIL.

Looking at her.

Do you really want me to run — very much?

GEORGIE.

Amazed.

Want you — ? Why, Phil, there isn't any question, is there — ?

Seizing his arm.

You must — oh, you *must*!

PHIL.

With a little smile and bow.

Since you insist !

Turning to Noyes.

Very well, Clif, I'm yo' man. Go in and wire Watson anything you like.

NOYES.

Seizing his hand and shaking it effusively, one hand on his shoulder.

That certainly sounds good — I knew you'd see it in the right way ! I knew you'd come up to scratch in a mattah o' duty ! You always did, Phil, I remembah that ! Congratulations — eh, Miss Geo'gie ?

GEORGIE.

Delighted.

Hundreds of them — oh, Phil !

NOYES.

If you'll excuse me, I think I'll get off that wire right now. You see Billy Watson has too many shares o' my stock not t' feel ne'vous on an occasion like this !

He goes up the steps.

PHIL.

Calling after him, simply.

Thank you, Clif.

NOYES.

Turning.

What's that?

Going on.

Oh, I didn't do it — you've got yo'self to thank !

He opens the door and goes inside.

GEORGIE.

With an impulsive little shake of joy.

Yo' Excellency ! — Oh, it's too good to be true !

PHIL.

With a smile.

It isn't true — yet. Won't you sit down ?

He offers her the bench.

GEORGIE.

No, but it will be ! And I'll be so glad, when I'm in Europe, to think of you ovah heah, wuhking fo' yo' home and yo' State — fo' the South ! It's

my idea of what a man should do! — I — I reckon it's every So'the'n girl's!

She smiles at him with sudden shyness and sits down.

PHIL.

But you'll be back b'fo' long — won't you?

GEORGIE.

I don't know. Mothah want's mo' and mo' to stay away quite a time. You see she misses not having Rive'view — that tiny city house isn't neah so comf'table. It's so't o' ha'd on rich people all of a sudden to be po'!

She sighs, then looks up at him with a bright little smile.

Little mothah has an idea I'm a second Melba! It'll take some time to prove to her all I can do is to amuse people aftah dinnah!

PHIL.

What was that you sang while I was in the othah room?

GEORGIE.

That? Oh, one of the old German stand-bys — the wo'ds are rather attractive — I wondah if you were listening — but of co'se you weren't.

PHIL.

How do you know?

GEORGIE.

Hesitating a trifle, and then smiling.

Yo' getting to be such a great man, there's no room left fo' — the little things —

PHIL.

What do yo' mean by — little things?

GEORGIE.

Not looking up at him.

Oh, my songs — and me. — How stupidly we're talking!

PHIL.

Laughing softly and tenderly.

Yo' an' yo' songs! — Say, Geo'gie!

GEORGIE.

Yes?

PHIL.

Sitting down beside her.

We used to have fun when you lived at Rive'view, didn't we? 'Membah the time we rode ovah to

the Willis fa'm and stole a chicken and boiled it in the old bait-can with river watah? My, but how yo' mothah gave it to me when she found out — !

GEORGIE.

I nevah told her, anyway!

PHIL.

She expected a lot from me, just b'cause I was so much oldah!

Laughing softly and sweetly to himself.

Lawd! I don't know as she got it!

GEORGIE.

I was so — flatte'd at having a big boy like you to go around with — why, I think I'd have done anything you told me to, no mattah what it was! And you used to bully me! Implicit, servile obedience was the one rule on which you insisted!

PHIL.

'Membah the time you come heah aftah yo' first yeah at school? It was June, then, and the magnolias were bloomin' late that summah, too. I sat out heah on this identical bench while you

were inside singin' — and I realized fo' the first time that you'd grown up ! My, that was an awfully funny feeling !

He smiles half tenderly.

GEORGIE.

And I was so frightened of you — you can't imagine ! I tried to call you "Mr. Morrow" !

PHIL.

D' you remembah the day I ran the qua'tah in the meet with Yale, and you came up to Boston from Dobbs Ferry just to see it ?

GEORGIE.

I ce'tainly do ! It was yo' last 'va'sity race — senior yeah.

PHIL.

And I came in from Cambridge to yo' hotel the mawnin' of the meet ?

GEORGIE.

Smiling.

Yes — and I was so proud of you, and the othah girls kept peeking in at us from behind the portières until I closed the doors !

PHIL.

And you wore some white roses —

GEORGIE.

Interrupting.

You'd sent them to me that very mawning. Don't say you've fo'gotten !

PHIL.

And you gave me one fo' my buttonhole.

GEORGIE.

Did I ?

PHIL.

“Don't say you've fo'gotten !” And d' you remembah what you told me as you put it on ?

GEORGIE.

It — it was *so* long ago !

PHIL.

I remembah ev'ry wo'd. “Yo' going to win fo' the South and fo' me. I couldn't beah to see you beaten !”

GEORGIE.

Laughing a bit.

I was an awfully silly girl ! but — (*glancing up at him*) you *did* win !

PHIL.

I know.

He takes out his pocket-book in a business-like manner and removes from it carefully something which he holds in the palm of his hand.

Theah's the rose.

GEORGIE.

Wheah ?

She leans over to see it.

The same one ?

He nods.

You've carried it all these yeahs ?

He nods again.

And you nevah told me ? You foolish boy, how deah of you !

Her voice suddenly trembles.

PHIL.

I've got anothah race on now and — (*lightly*) please may I have anothah rose ?

GEORGIE.

Of co'se you may ! Wait —

She rises and goes quickly over to where the rose-bushes bloom along the edge of the driveway. Bending over, she selects one and breaks it off, then returns, trimming its leaves.

Theah !

He rises and she tries to find his buttonhole.

Oh, you haven't a buttonhole ! Nevah mind, I'll just put a pin in.

She busies herself with attaching it to his lapel.

PHIL.

After a little pause.

Aren't you going to say it ?

GEORGIE.

Suddenly.

Ouch !

Sucking her finger and going on with her work.

Say what ?

PHIL.

Yo^u¹ know !

GEORGIE.

Smiling and bending her head a little.

If you think it'll help?

PHIL.

Simply.

It did befo' — a heap!

GEORGIE.

Her work finished, holding him by the lapels and looking straight up at him.

Yo' going to win!

PHIL.

Well? Go on.

GEORGIE.

Isn't that all?

PHIL.

No.

GEORGIE.

Dropping her hands and lowering her gaze.

What was the rest of that silliness? Oh, yes —
"Fo' the South and me. I — I couldn't beah, to
see you beaten!"

She has unconsciously thrown into the last words more sincerity than she intended. Then suddenly, feeling herself blushing, she puts one hand to her face and tries to turn away.

PHIL.

Georgie !

GEORGIE.

I stayed that time and saw you win. I wish —
I wish I could do it again !

He suddenly draws her to him, one of his hands holding hers, one arm about her, her head bent low.

PHIL.

Almost in a whisper.

My da'ling ! My honey !

There is a brief pause. Then still very low.

You know I love you ?

GEORGIE.

Her head still bowed, her voice as quiet as his.

Yes — now I know.

PHIL.

And what about you ?

GEORGIE.

Lifting her head slowly, her eyes filled with tears, a trembling little smile on her lips.

Haven't you seen it — in all these yeahs?

She buries her face on his shoulder.

PHIL.

Whispering, in wonder.

Why — Geo'gie!

There is a brief pause.

GEORGIE.

Drawing away from him and wiping her eyes with her one free hand, as she smiles.

You make love so beautifully, Phil deah — nobody else has evah done it *qua'tah* as well! There's something about you — I don't know what — I've felt it all my life — Oh — !

He draws her to him again.

PHIL.

Laughing softly.

And I nevah knew!

He kisses her again and again. As he does so the regular beat of a horse's hoofs, galloping, is heard coming from left-back, down the drive.

Hark — !

(He lifts his head, and, still holding her in his arms, listens intently for a moment. The hoof beats are drawing nearer.)

GEORGIE.

What's that?

PHIL.

Releasing her and walking back, towards driveway.

I don't know. Some one fo' me, I reckon.

By this time the hoof beats are close at hand, and the sound of a snorting horse, the stamping of feet, and the rider's voice are heard.

PHIL.

Calling.

Who is it?

PURDY.

Outside, heard dismounting.

Whoa-up there — stop that!

Calling back.

It's me, suh — Pu'dy. Kin I hitch my mare to this tree?

PHIL.

Sho'ly.

Coming back to where the girl is listening.

He's my deputy sheriff. Something's happened.
P'raps you'd better go inside, honey.

GEORGIE.

Of co'se — but — Phil, you'll let me know if it's anything serious?

PHIL.

'Deed I shall. Now just step in to yo' mother and don't say that Pu'dy's come. Maybe it's nothing at all — just an evening visit.

He takes her hand and lets her go at the steps.

GEORGIE.

Turning back at the top.

Oh, Phil, shall I tell mothah about — (*smiling*) you know?

PHIL.

S'pose we wait till we both can tell her, honey. Don't you think that would be bettah?

GEORGIE.

Of co'se.

She goes towards the door.

PHIL.

Geo'gie !

GEORGIE.

Turning.

Yes ?

PHIL.

Calling softly.

Think of all the time I've wasted !

GEORGIE.

But it's nowhere neah too late !

PHIL.

Calling again.

Geo'gie !

GEORGIE.

Again turning back.

Yes, deah ?

PHIL.

Don't fo'get I — like you mighty well !

GEORGIE.

You silly boy — !

She blows him a kiss and disappears into the house.

PHIL.

Going down the drive a bit.

Now, what's the mattah, Pu'dy ?

PURDY.

Emerging from the shrubbery which conceals the driveway.

It's a niggah, suh, — the usual crime.

PHIL.

Clinching his hands.

The first time I've run against it ! Oh, that's too bad !

PURDY.

A thick-set, bearded man, dressed in the slouchy manner of the Southern farmer.

Whew ! I reckon I came up from the jail 'n less 'n fo' minutes !

He wipes his forehead.

PHIL.

Come ovah heah and sit down. Want a drink ?

PURDY.

Following him.

No, suh. I'll be all right in a jiffy.

He drops into a chair.

PHIL.

Between his teeth.

Who's the girl?

PURDY.

Panting.

Jake Willis's — youngest — da'ter —

PHIL.

Horrified.

Jake Willis — Mamie? Why, I saw her only this afte'noon. When did it —

PURDY.

She went ovah to Buckram's t' buy some meal b'fo' they closed. It's through the woods from the Willis place.

A brief pause.

Well, it was in theah he got her.

PHIL.

Is she — alive?

PURDY.

Dr. Rumsey says he don' know whetheh she'll live or not, suh.

PHIL.

And Jake?

PURDY.

Plum' crazy, suh ! You'd nevah know he was the same man. Jake's always been a peaceful sort o' citizen, but now — you wait till you see him, suh !

PHIL.

Quickly.

Has he done anything?

PURDY.

He's tryin' to.

PHIL.

Quickly.

He told me this afte'noon he was dead against lynching !

PURDY.

Rising.

I reckon he's changed his mind, then. All I know, suh, is that Jake's got togethah a crowd o'

all the men round heah, an' they're aftah that niggah with Sho'ty McCabe's dawgs.

PHIL.

Why didn't you let me know b'fo'?

PURDY.

I was out havin' suppah, suh. I lef' wo'd at the jail, same's I always do, t' ring you up case anythin' happened.

PHIL.

They haven't done it.

PURDY.

Mebby they ain't found out yet. I come heah 's straight 's my mare could go, suh.

PHIL.

You did yo' best — I know. The niggah's on the run, then? Pu'dy, we've got to get him b'fo' they do! I won't have my county and my office disgraced by a lynchin'!

PURDY.

I reckon, suh, we're goin' t' have a ha'd time!

PHIL.

'It must be one o' the chain-gang broke loose from
Bake'sville ! A stray niggah — damn him ! — he's
spoiled my reco'd !

PURDY.

Slowly.

No, suh, he ain't one o' them. Jake's gal, she
spotted him.

PHIL.

Turning.

What d'you mean ?

PURDY.

She — knew him.

PHIL.

Who is he?

PURDY.

I'm right sorry, suh, but — well, he's one o' yo'
tenants.

PHIL.

One o' *my* —

PURDY.

It's that young buck niggah, Joe White — yo'
mammy Jinny's gran'son. He'd been drinkin'

down t' the saloon all aftahnoon. You know he got his wages yestahday. They threw him out down theah 'bout six o'clock, an' the devil was in him !

PHIL.

Is she — *sho'* ?

PURDY.

She tol' her fathah his name an' what direction he'd took b'fo' she went — unconscious —

PHIL.

Purdy, we must find that niggah b'fo' the mob runs him down. We must get him to the jail and keep him theah if we have to shoot every man in the county !

PURDY.

If you'll take my advice, suh, we won' do any sech thing.

PHIL.

Fiercely.

They'll lynch him in a minute !

PURDY.

They'll do that, suh, with or without us. Listen to reason, suh ! We've got three wa'dens at a

ramshackle jail that would fall in if you looked at it twice. It would take all night t' get help from Bake'sville — the las' train's gone. An' the' are ovah three hundred dete'mined fathahs an' brothahs helpin' Jake run down that scoundrel. Even if we had the son-of-a-gun in jail, d'you think we could keep him theah five minutes? An' we don' know where he is any mo' 'n they do. We can't do our duty, suh, so I should considah we was free t' jes' sit back an' watch.

PHIL.

Theah *must* be something —

PURDY.

If you'll pa'don me, Mistah Phil, I'm an oldah han' at this game than you. An' the time comes when even the bes' sheriff — which you ce'tainly are, suh! — has t' fol' his han's an' do nothin' at all!

PHIL.

Suddenly.

We must get some dogs ourselves and —

PURDY.

Theah ain't none within fifty miles 'cept Sho'ty's.

NOYES.

Opening the door of the house and coming down the steps quickly.

Phil, theah's been a telephone from the jail an' —

PHIL.

I know. Mr. Pu'dy heah is my deputy sheriff. I've hea'd all about it.

Mrs. Byrd — a small, commonplace-looking woman, dressed simply in black, and with an autocratic manner born of long command in petty affairs — comes down the steps hastily, followed by Georgie.

MRS. BYRD.

Imperiously.

Phil !

PHIL.

Yes, Mrs. Byrd, I know all about it and —

MRS. BYRD.

Remembah yo' yo' fathah's son ! Shut yo' eyes as tight as they'll go and just pray the Lo'd to keep you from makin' a fool of yo'self !

GEORGIE.

Mothah !



MRS. BYRD.

Very firmly.

That negro's goin' to be lynched ! Now don't a'gue ! When I say a thing I mean it ! If wo'st comes to wo'st I'll walk right out and do it myself !

PHIL.

That negro's *not* a-goin' to be lynched, Mrs. Byrd. I'm going to find him if I possibly can and give him every protection the law provides !

MRS. BYRD.

I always knew that boy would come to a bad end ! He never could look me in the eye fo' mo' 'n two minutes at a time ! An' it's yo' own fault, Phil.

PHIL.

Biting his lips.

Indeed ?

MRS. BYRD.

You treat 'em like yo' own family ! I've said so fo' yeahs. It is just as yo' po', deah fathah used t' say, "The only way to make a negro straight is to knock him down !"

GEORGIE.

Distressed.

Please, mothah !

MRS. BYRD.

Turning to her.

All right, Geo'gie, all right ! If you an' Phil can feel secuah with a big, murderin' gorilla skippin' loose ovah the country, I have nothin' mo' to say ! Give him a gold medal an' tell him to do it again !

She stands, indignant and resigned.

NOYES.

Close to Phil.

The luck's on our side, fo' sho' ! You'll get out of this business with clean han's an' yo' won't lose the anti-niggah vote. Why, if you was to stick up fo' this black devil now—well, yo' chances in the convention would take a consid'able drop ! Remembah that, ol' man !

PHIL.

Summarily.

Quit yo' talkin', Clif.

To Georgie.

Geo'gie, would you min' telling Simms to send

down to mammy's cabin? I want to see her right off. If anybody knows wheah Joe is, she's the one.

GEORGIE.

Yes, Phil.

Breaking out as she turns to the steps.

Oh, that po' girl! And I talked to her only this —

She closes her lips with an effort.

PHIL.

Gently.

I know, deah, I know. Now the message to mammy, please.

She goes up the steps and into the house.

Turning next to Purdy.

Pu'dy, you ride back to the jail — as ha'd as yo' mare can go! — and do what you can to make the cellah-room safe. Knock off the bolts from an empty cell and put them on that door.

PURDY.

Resignedly.

I'll do it, suh, but 'tain't much use.

PHIL.

Sternly.

We're going to do everything we can to save that niggah fo' the law! Unde'stand, Pu'dy?

PURDY.

Yes, suh.

PHIL.

Stay at the jail till I telephone you. Be ready to leave at a moment's notice with two wa'dens. We may get him yet. That's all.

PURDY.

Yes, suh.

He goes off and later can be heard galloping away.

PHIL.

To Mrs. Byrd.

Mrs. Byrd, theah's ha'd wuhk ahead fo' some of us, but I trust it won't inte'feah with yo' sleepin' as well as usual. You will fin' some o' my bes' strawberries in yo' room and I have sent up the novel you were asking fo'. Now if you will kindly take my a'm, we'll say good night at the stairs.

He escorts her up the steps and into the house.

Noyes gives a short laugh, and, putting a cigar in his mouth, goes over to the table under the live-oak tree to get a match before following them. He lights his cigar, then turns towards the steps. Just as he has reached them —

Jinny appears from the left-back, coming along the drive-way. She is trembling and tottering, evidently under the influence of excitement and terror. As she sees his back she hurries and calls him softly.

JINNY.

Marse Phil! — Marse Phil!

NOYES.

Turning.

That you, mammy?

He suddenly comes closer to her.

Did you get Mr. Morrow's message? It strikes me you've been powe'ful quick!

JINNY.

'Scuse me, suh, I done think it wuz Marse Phil — 's gettin' so dahk.

By this time the moonlight is beginning to appear.

NOYES.

Why do you want to see Marse Phil?

He is gazing at her closely.

JINNY.

With a gasp.

My Joe — he's done it !

NOYES.

Quickly.

How d'you know ?

JINNY.

En' Marse Phil gwine t' keep him f'om bein'
kotched —

NOYES.

How can he ? He don't know where Joe is.

JINNY.

He — he done come — wif me —

NOYES.

In intense surprise.

What ?

JINNY.

Pointing tremblingly to the shrubbery about the drive.
He's dar — on his han's en' knees — a-waitin' —

NOYES.

Then he came home ?

JINNY.

With a touch of wildness.

Back to his ol' mammy, suh ! En' dey're a-chasin'
him wif dawgs !

NOYES.

'Co'se they are. An' what's mo' — they'ah a-
goin' to get him !

JINNY.

No, sah — no, no, — Marse Phil gwine t' keep
him f'om bein' kotched !

NOYES.

Harshly.

He can't, I tell you. He has only fo' men at
the jail. Even if he got yo' boy into it — which
I don't believe he could — they'd bust it open
inside a minute !

JINNY.

With an hysterical wail.

What kin Joe do, suh ? What kin he do ?

NOYES.

Let him make a run into the country — across the rivah — catch on a train — *anythin'* — but fo' God's sake don't let him hang round heah !

JINNY.

Shrilly.

De dawgs — dey'll kotch him fo' sho' ! Dey're gettin' him now — I hear 'em in mah cabin — he can't go nowheres, suh —

NOYES.

Shrugging his shoulders and glancing apprehensively at the house.

Well, he did it, an' I reckon he might's well pay sooner 's lateh ! That's all, mammy.

JINNY.

After a brief pause, clasping her old hands spasmodically.
Nobody dast hunt fo' him in Marse Phil's house —

NOYES.

What's that ?

JINNY.

Marse Phil mus' take him in de house —

NOYES.

Savagely.

He won't do it — he don't dare —

JINNY.

With an odd intensity.

He gotteh do it — 'kaze — 'kaze —

She stops suddenly to find him very near her, staring at her face in the brightening moonlight. The words die away from her lips as she looks at him. From far away, in the silence, can be heard the faint sound of men's voices, and, now and again, the long, clear baying of the hounds.

Dar ! — Yo' heah dem? — O Gohd —

NOYES.

Suddenly seizing her arm, jerking out his words between his teeth.

You know — you know — !

JINNY.

Facing him with a new terror.

What yo' say?

NOYES.

Yo' — her sistah — ol' Morrow's Belle — his quadroon gal — don't you deny it now !

JINNY.

With a screech.

What dat yo' say?

NOYES.

I found it in a lettah she wrote to him — an' you know! I reckon we're the only two people in the wo'l'd who know!

JINNY.

I swar t' Gohd I dunno nuffin' — yo' sho' mistook, suh —

NOYES.

Don't you keep on lyin' t' me —

JINNY.

Flinging up her head.

'Scuse me, suh, I dunno what yo' talkin' 'bout! No, I dunno nuffin' — w'erefo' you come heah en ask me ef I know —

NOYES.

His teeth closed.

You tell me the truth, you ol' black devil, or I'll —

He gives her arm a savage twist.

She cries aloud.

Phil appears at door.

JINNY.

As she sees him.

Marse Phil —

Noyes releases her with a savage laugh and turns away to relight his cigar.

Noise of dogs louder.

PHIL.

As he hurries down the steps.

Theah you are, mammy ! I've been waiting fo' you. Do you know anything about Joe — do you know where he is ?

JINNY.

Clasping her hands.

Marse Phil —

PHIL.

Quickly.

Where is he, mammy, fo' Heaven's sake ?

JINNY.

Pointing shakily to the bushes.

Dar —

PHIL.

Heah — in the ga'den ?

JINNY.

He's a-hidin' dar — I done mak' him come wif me, Marse Phil. I —

PHIL.

Call him out, mammy — quick — ! We haven't got a moment !

JINNY.

Going shakily towards the driveway.

Joe !

There is a pause. Then, in a louder tone.

Joe — come out fum dar — !

There is another pause; then, slowly and silently, the negro crawls from a gap in the shrubbery. He is a huge, very black young African, his lips gray with terror, the whites of his eyes rolling. He is still panting and exhausted. His miserable clothing is torn and muddy. He does not try to rise, but crouches down near the driveway, his head bent — a horrible picture of bestial fear.

PHIL.

With a glance of disgust.

Get up.

JINNY.

With sudden passion.

Marse Phil, yo' gwine t' keep him heah — in yo' own house ! Ef yo' don' dey'll kotch him — an' den — O Marse Phil — !

PHIL.

To Joe.

If you expect me to help you — I want the truth !
Did you do it ?

The noise of the posse grows clearer.

JOE.

Moving his lips for a moment, then speaking in a thick voice.

Boss — I —

PHIL.

Sternly.

The truth — I tell you —

JOE.

Hoarsely.

I reckon — I — I done it.

JINNY.

O Marse Phil — don' —

Her voice dies away in abject whimperings.

PHIL.

Turning away with a gesture of loathing.

You black beast, you — !

JINNY.

Flinging herself on her knees before him, clinging to his hand.

Yo' not gwine t' sen' him away? Not gwine t' let him be kotched? No — no — yo' not — my Marse Phil ain't gwine do dat!

PHIL.

Gently.

Wait, mammy.

He tries to unloosen her hold.

JINNY.

Hysterically.

Keep him heah — jes' fo' me — I couldn't b'ar it, Marse Phil — yo' gwine t' — keep —

NOYES.

Who has been listening and who now comes up quickly to Phil.

He's confessed it now. Phil, if you sheltah this Gawd-blasted niggah in yo' home, — it'll be yo' political ruin, — you can nevah live it down — !

PHIL.

To Noyes, blazing.

Damn it, I'm not thinking of politics at a time like this !

The noise of the men and hounds suddenly dies away.

Wait — ! They've lost the trail !

To Joe.

Did you cross the stream down by the live-oaks ?

JOE.

Yessah. B'fo' I come up to de cabin.

PHIL.

They may lose it fo' good. 'Tisn't likely you'd be heah. Anyway this gives us a little time.

NOYES.

Earnestly.

'Phone fo' the wa'dens an' Pu'dy t' come up by the back road an' take him down t' the jail. They only need five minutes.

A slight pause.

Phil, if you won't think o' yo' own career, fo' God's sake think o' the rest of us !

PHIL.

Calmly.

To jail? That's simply handing him ovah to the mob! What good are five men against three hundred? I won't do it!

GEORGIE.

Appearing from the house at the top of the steps.

Phil, what's all that noise? Mothah's getting quite ne'vous, and Simms says that —

PHIL.

Go back, Geo'gie, an' keep yo' mothah inside. Tell her not to worry.

GEORGIE.

It isn't —

She suddenly sees Joe and understands.

Oh, deah — !

She gives a little gasp and goes inside immediately.

NOYES.

Close to Phil and with great intensity.

Let the di'ty animal loose in the house with *her*? Oh, *Phil* — !

PHIL.

Suddenly throwing up his head.

Clif, go and telephone fo' Pu'dy an' the wa'dens. We'll make a run fo' the jail. It's — it's the only thing I can do !

NOYES.

Suddenly, as he turns.

Listen !

There is a triumphant roar from the mob far down the plantation, and the baying of the dogs is renewed, loud and eager.

We're too late — ! They've picked up the scent !

He runs up the steps and into the house. At the sound, the unhappy negro has given a low howl of despair. Then, whining and grovelling and twitching in an ecstasy of terror, he crouches behind Phil — who, pale and calm, stands at the foot of the steps, facing the driveway (left).

Jinny stands with her hands over her ears to keep out the sound, her eyes shut, her lips mumbling to herself in prayer.

JINNY.

Flinging her old face up to the sky, her eyes still shut.

O Gohd — O Gohd — O Gohd —

She sways backward and forward gently.

PHIL.

Never taking his eyes off the driveway.

Be quiet, mammy !

He takes out his revolver, sees that it is loaded, cocks it, and then, holding it in his right hand, again calmly faces the approaching sound.

Meanwhile the noise has been growing rapidly from left-back, as the mob sweeps up the driveway. The hounds are yelping, whining, every now and then breaking into a long, deep bay — the men are shouting. As it all grows nearer the individual voices are heard, especially one, hard and dry, which is raised in short commands. Finally, with a burst from the dogs, the red light of the torches begins to flicker through the trees (left-back), casting long, smoky shadows along the drive.

JAKE WILLIS.

Outside.

Heah ! Don' you come no nearah ! I reckon the sheriff's got him !

A MAN'S VOICE.

Thick with drink.

Damn the niggah — we'll bu'n him alive — what 'bout it, boys ?

There is a chorus of angry shouts.

JAKE.

Commandingly.

Get back theah, Tom Melledge — yo' drunk an' I don' need yo' assistance jes' at present ! Be still — hold in them dawgs, I say !

ANOTHER MAN'S VOICE.

Go ahead, Jake, we'll wait heah fo' you nice an' quiet.

JAKE.

An' don' 'low them dawgs t' move an inch fu'theh! — Down, suh, down!

There is a chorus of yelps from the excited hounds, a crack of a whip, and a renewed howl. Finally the noise dies away suddenly into an ominous silence — broken only by an occasional whine or the shuffle of impatient feet — as Jake Willis, illuminated by the red gleam of the mob's torches, appears on the driveway through the trees. He is a tall, thin, straight man of

about fifty. He is bareheaded, dressed in flannel shirt and trousers, and his high boots are spattered with mud. Over his left arm hangs a long coil of rope. His face is pale and set — a distorted, livid mask. He stops as he sees Phil and the crouching negro behind him. For a moment there is a silence.

PHIL.

Calmly.

Good evenin', Jake.

JAKE.

In an expressionless voice.

Evenin', suh.

PHIL.

What can I do fo' you t'night?

JAKE.

I reckon, suh, you'll have to hand him ovah.

PHIL.

Who?

JAKE.

That niggah — back o' you.

PHIL.

Steps forward impulsively, his voice showing his emotion.
Jake, I can unde'stand down to the bottom what you want to do and why. And it's human nature—I know that! But, fo' God's sake, try to jam down yo' feelin's fo' a moment and *think!* Remembah what you said only this afte'noon when we were talking ovah this very thing—"lynching," you tol' me, "is next wo'st to the crime itself!"

JAKE.

Immovable.

You'd bettah hand him ovah, suh.

PHIL.

S'pose I did. As sho' as theah's a judgment above us, Jake, you and I would give our souls—not t' have done it in less'n a month!

JAKE.

You needn't bothah yo' haid no mo' 'bout me, suh.

PHIL.

Jake, don't go back on me! You know my office— you know I've got only fo' men t' help me do

the right thing, and you've got three hundred t' help you do the wrong ! If yo' on my side, Jake, we can manage 'em ! You call it off with yo' frien's and let me get this niggah safe in jail and I'll promise you on my wo'd of honah as a Morrow the quickest trial in the hist'ry o' this county !

JAKE.

We want him now, suh.

PHIL.

I've known you all my life, Jake, and my fathah b'fo' me ! Can't you trust me this once ?

JAKE.

Mebbe you don't know, Mistah Phil, that my gal — my li'l Mamie — she's jes' — died —

His voice chokes oddly. He cannot go on.

PHIL

With a cry of horror and sympathy.

Jake ! Oh — ! Yo' po' man — !

The negro has buried his face in the ground.

JAKE.

Controlling himself and speaking in the same dry voice as before, as he shifts the coil of rope a bit.

I reckon, suh, you'd bettah hand him ovah right away. I don' like t' keep the boys a-waitin'.

PHIL.

Desperately.

Isn't theah anything I can say, Jake, that'll change yo' mind — that'll bring you to yo' senses?

JAKE.

Nuthin', suh.

PHIL.

Decisively.

Theah's not a man in the State — I don' care who he is! — that could feel a deepah horroh and disgust fo' such a crime and such a criminal than I! But — (*with tremendous intensity as he steps forward*) — you and yo' men out theah have elected me sheriff o' this county to uphold the law, and now, by God! you can't stop me doin' it!

JAKE.

In the same inflexible voice.

It's gettin' right late, suh, you'd bettah hand him

ovah b'fo' theah's any trouble. You nevah can tell what may happen.

Meanwhile an ominous murmur at the delay has risen from the driveway — deep and angry.

A MAN'S VOICE.

Say, Jake, is he theah?

The dogs begin yelping again.

Come back heah, suh!

There is the lash of the whip and one dog gives a loud howl of pain.

Just here Noyes comes out from the house, followed by Purdy and two wardens.

NOYES.

As he comes down the steps.

All right, Phil. Pu'dy's heah.

PHIL.

Not looking round.

Handcuff Joe.

JAKE.

Yo' not goin' t' oblige us, suh?

PHIL.

Grimly.

Not this time, Jake.

The wardens have pulled Joe to a kneeling position and are snapping on the handcuffs.

Jake has turned quickly away and walked down the driveway to the shrubbery. Here he stands for a moment, the red torchlight falling upon his figure as he faces the mob, his back to Phil and the house.

JAKE.

His voice raised.

The niggah's heah, but the sheriff don' feel jes' like givin' him up. Pu'dy an' his wa'dens hev come an' I reckon they're a-tryin' t' take him down t' the jail.

There is a loud shout, "We'll get him! The jail's easy! They can't make it!" etc., rise above the din.

Jake continues when silence again falls.

You men s'round the house at a distance of about three hundred ya'ds — down 's fah's the tu'n-pike, an' cleah round by the packin' sheds. They'h ladies heah an' we don't want t' disturb them if we kin possibly help it.

PHIL.

Calling to Jake quickly and very sternly.

It's my duty to tell you, Jake, that my men and I are fully armed, and if we are attacked on our way to the jail, we will defend ourselves rega'dless o' results !

JAKE.

Who has listened quietly and attentively.

I know you mean right, Mistah Phil, but I reckon this is *my* business.

He goes out quickly along the driveway. A moment later his voice is heard again raised in command.

JAKE.

Outside.

Scattah now — double quick ! Geo'ge, take fifty o' them down along the pasture ! I'll covah the road —

His voice is heard for a moment above the renewed yelping of the dogs and the trampling of many feet. The noise gradually recedes — the mob is disposing of itself in an orderly and determined fashion.

PHIL.

Turning hurriedly to his men as the posse is retiring and speaking low and rapidly.

We'll go back as you came, by the stables through

the paddock, then take the carriage drive to that
sho't cut across the pasture. It ought to bring
us out beyond theah ci'cle, and then a run fo'
the jail. We got a chance, anyway !

To Purdy.

Sta't along — I'll follow you !

PURDY.

In despair.

'Tain't the slightest use, suh !

PHIL.

Savagely.

Go on, I say !

*Joe, who has broken loose from the wardens, flings
himself at Jinny's feet and now clings piteously to her
skirt.*

JOE.

Mammy — Mammy — ! Don' you let 'em take
me — I'll be kotched fo' sho' — lemme stay heah —

PURDY.

To his men.

Get him away — quick ! Damn his black soul !

*They pull him away, still blubbering, from the old
woman's skirts.*

Gag him with somethin', Harry.

While the other two hold him, the third crams his hand-kerchief in the negro's mouth.

Now fo' the stables an' the paddock !

They yank Joe to his feet and, with a man on either side, half run, half drag him away beyond the house.

Phil turns hastily to follow them, but is stopped before he can reach them by Jinny, who twines herself around his knees.

JINNY.

Shrilly.

Marse Phil, yo' mus' keep him heah — in yo' own house — fo' Gohd's sake —

PHIL.

Trying in vain to shake her off.

Let go, mammy, or I'll knock you down !

JINNY.

Wildly.

Listen, Marse Phil, yo' mus' keep him heah — 'kaze he's yo' —

She suddenly stops short, as if realizing her words for the first time.

NOYES.

Who, unnoticed, has come up to her.

Well, mammy?

He puts a hand suddenly on her shoulder. As she hears him and feels his touch, she shrinks, releases her hold on Phil,—who, with a furious exclamation, rushes past her,—then, with a long wail, she raises her withered arms high above her head, drops them, and stands motionless and silent, her face turned toward the sky.

PHIL.

To Noyes, as he rushes past Jinny.

Heah — ! Come on !

NOYES.

Barring the way with his large body.

We'h not a-goin', Phil.

PHIL.

Too hurried to be furious.

Yo' fool ! They'll get away without us !

He tries to push by, but Noyes takes him by both arms firmly.

NOYES.

Quietly, firmly, and good-humoredly.

They'h bound to get that niggah — they would anyways. Phil, I'm savin' yo' nomination !

PHIL.

Beside himself.

An' yo' own dam' distille'ies — ! Let me go !

He tries frantically to pull himself from Noyes' grasp.

NOYES.

Still quietly.

I'm the strongah man, Phil !

Phil makes a savage twist and tries to throw Noyes by tripping him.

Between his teeth.

No, you don't, mistah !

For a moment there is a furious, silent struggle.

PHIL.

In the midst of it, warningly.

I'll — shoot —

GEORGIE.

Appearing half fearfully at the door and looking out, then seeing the stage apparently empty.

Mr. Noyes — ?

At the sound of her voice the two men suddenly cease struggling; but they retain their hold on one another.

NOYES.

Controlling his voice.

Yes, Miss Geo'gie.

GEORGIE.

Theah's a telegram fo' you. Shall I take it ?

NOYES.

If you please, Miss Geo'gie.

She goes inside.

PHIL.

With a sob in his voice.

Let go — damn you — it's my — *honah* —

There is a renewed and furious struggle to break away.

After a moment Georgie reappears at the door, excited and joyous.

GEORGIE.

Mr. Noyes, it's from W. Watson and it says —
(reading from a slip in her hand on which she has jotted down the message): "Morrow the very man. Count on la'ge majo'ity." Is Phil theah? Isn't it —

Just here, from quite a distance, dying down and lost amid a far-away roar of voices and savage cheers, comes a long scream of agony and terror. Jinny, without a sound, slowly crumples away into a shapeless heap on the ground.

NOYES.

Releasing Phil and wiping away the sweat from his forehead with a grim laugh.

They got him — without no shootin', too!

PHIL.

Turning his back to the others, walking forward a few steps unsteadily.

If I'd — I'd only kept him heah — in the house — !

He stands with bowed head and working hands, in vain trying to control himself.

At the cry Georgie has started violently and put her hands to her ears with an instinctive shudder. Then, seeing

Phil, she regains possession of herself with a great effort, and, coming down the steps, slowly approaches him and puts her hand tenderly and rather timidly upon his arm.

He turns his face away from her, as if ashamed.

GEORGIE.

Very sweetly and gently.

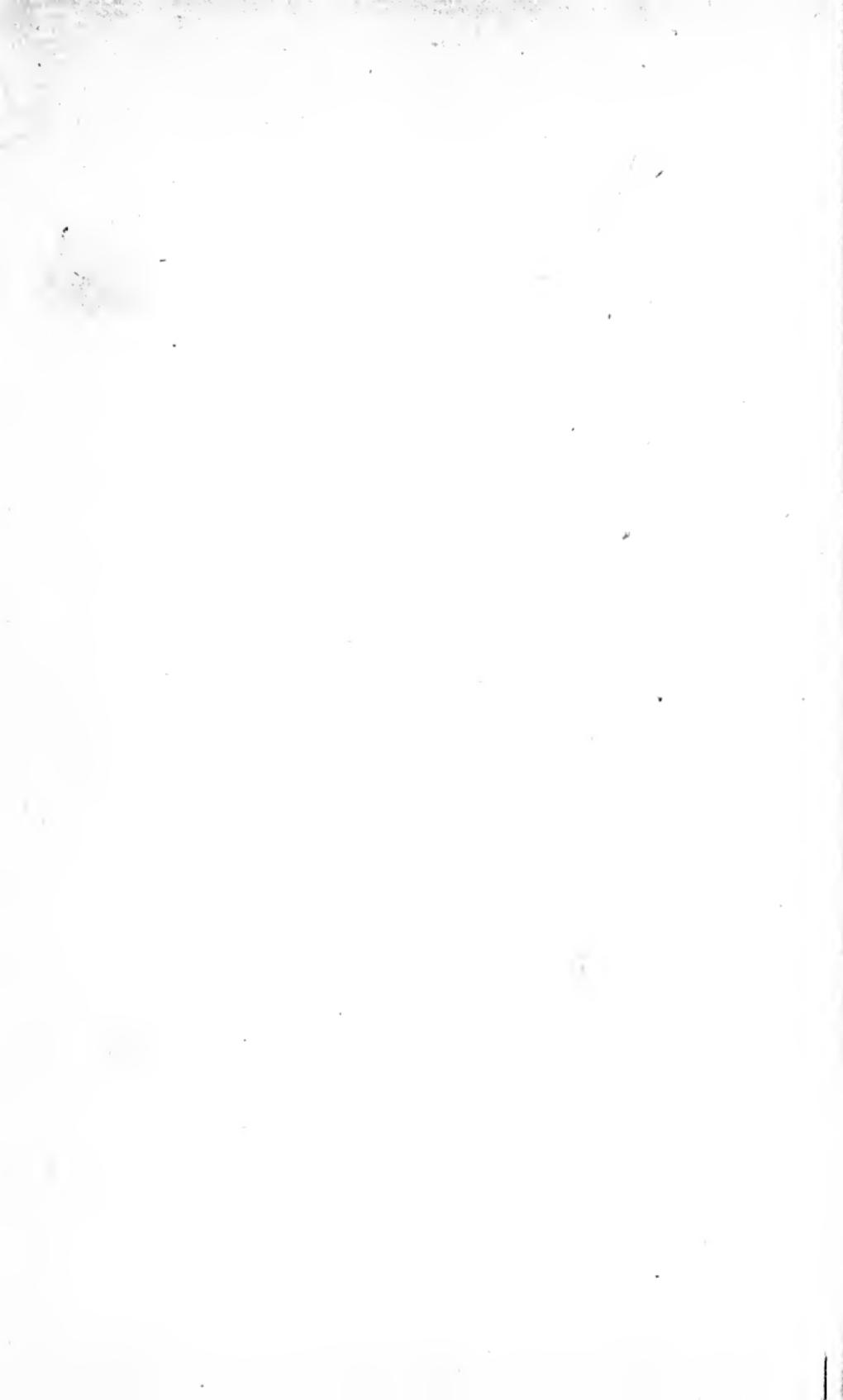
Phil — you couldn't help it, deah, and — (with a glance over her shoulder to make sure that Jinny cannot hear her) — and, aftah all, you know, he's — well, he's only a negro — !

He does not answer nor turn his head. Noyes watches them with a queer smile.

There is a dead silence, as the curtain falls quickly and suddenly.

END OF ACT I

ACT II



ACT II

Governor Morrow's study in his city house, on February 23rd. It is an attractive room, furnished with quiet luxury. The stage is triangular in shape. At right is a large double doorway, flanked by portières and showing the hall and balustrade of the stairs beyond. It has sliding doors, at present hidden. At left are two large windows, looking upon the street. The houses opposite can be seen. In the angle at back, where the two walls meet, is a table with magazines, cigars, cigarettes, whiskey, siphons, etc. To right, near the audience, are a huge leather easy-chair, a small low table with matches, and another chair. All these are grouped before the fireplace, in which a fire is glowing. Between the windows is a large table-desk, with chair back of it. There is another chair in front of it, a telephone on it, and it is strewn with papers, letters, memoranda, etc.

Near the window are an official looking letter-file and a small safe. The rest of the wall-space is occupied with book-cases filled with a jumble of volumes. On these cases are occasional busts of American statesmen, etchings, etc.

The room is not in perfect order. There are dispatch boxes on chairs, an overcoat flung over the desk, etc. It is about ten o'clock in the morning. The sunlight comes through the windows. As the curtain rises the stage is empty, but, from far away outside, can be heard the dim, threatening murmur of an angry mob. Occasionally an indistinguishable roar or command rises above this, and there are two or three distant gunshots, followed by a renewed commotion. Then, gradually growing nearer, the sound of a small party of drunken rioters is heard in the street below. They pass, talking, laughing, singing, occasionally firing off a revolver.

A MAN'S VOICE.

Outside.

Wheah 'll them niggahs gone ?

ANOTHER.

'Reckon we've finished 'em up good —

A THIRD.

Come on ovah to Point Street — theah breakin'
open the bahs !

ANOTHER.

Ain't that a coon ?

He fires.

THE FIRST.

Gawd, no ! That's a tree ! *X*

Another roar of laughter. By this time they are directly under the windows.

THE FIRST MAN.

Heah's wheah the Gove'noh lives —

ANOTHER.

We'll make a frien'ly call — he's a good one all right —

Enter Mrs. Byrd, very nervous, followed by Georgie, very calm. They are shown in by Simms. They are in street dress and carry various parcels. Simms has a box, hastily done up in paper.

MRS. BYRD.

Quickly.

Put it down, Simms, and close all those blinds ! Theah just outside ! Oh, deah — oh, deah — !

She drops her bundles and sinks exhausted into the big chair.

SIMMS.

Yassum.

As he cautiously looks about.

No dangah dis time, Miss Sally. Dey cain't ha'adly walk straight!

He closes the blinds.

Meanwhile the little party of drunken rioters are moving off, still yelling and laughing.

GEORGIE.

To Simms.

Did Mr. Barrington go out with the Gove'noh?

SIMMS.

Yassum, but he done come back 'bout ten minutes ago, all by hisself. He's in de pantry, gettin' some col' ham.

MRS. BYRD

I think Phil might have been heah! Oh, what a night!

GEORGIE.

To Simms.

You say the Gove'noh hasn't been home since the riots sta'ted yeste'day afte'noon?

SIMMS.

Yassum. He went out 'bout fo' o'clock an' he ain't come in all night.

MRS. BYRD.

He ought to have sent fo' us!

GEORGIE.

Deah, think of all he had to do!

Opening the blinds.

Theah gone now — it's all right.

MRS. BYRD.

Applying salts.

All right? With the guns going off like so many cannon-crackahs an' the groceries not delive'ed an' the pantry-window broken in two places an' all the wash stolen? What's the good of being engaged to the Gove'noh o' the State if he can't even keep yo mothah's silk stockin's safe on the clo's-line?

GEORGIE.

My deah, I love him fo' thinking of the city fi'st!

To Simms.

Oh, Simms, tell Mr. Barrington we're heah, will you?

SIMMS.

Yes, Miss Geo'gie.

He shuffles out.

MRS. BYRD.

Oh, my head — my head !

Starting at the sound of a distant gunshot.

Listen ! Theah they go again !

GEORGIE.

Tenderly.

Deah, all the trouble is down in the negro qua'tah. Theah's no dangah up heah — at least not half so much !

MRS. BYRD.

Dangah! Why, didn't we have to go round eight blocks to avoid a mob — on the way ovah ?

GEORGIE.

But it's all right now, little mothah ! We're here safe and sound — and I reckon nobody 'll hu't us in the Gove'noh's own house !

MRS. BYRD.

It'll be the fi'st place they'll attack !

GEORGIE.

Laughing.

Nonsense ! Phil's too populah fo' that ! An'

anyway, it's the Mayoh theah aftah — he's the one that's put negroes on the police fo'ce —

Enter Barrington. He is a clever young man of about twenty-five, at present unshaven and with his clothes untidy.

BARRINGTON.

As he enters.

How d'you do? Mrs. Byrd, yo' lookin' so young t'day I came mighty neah callin' you by yo' fi'st name! I tell you what, Miss Geo'gie, no one but you could stand up an' hold yo' own alongside of a mothah like that! Well, I'm right glad t' see you both! Have you jus' come ovah?

GEORGIE.

Shaking hands.

Yes; we grew so't o' ne'veous, with all that firing an' —

MRS. BYRD.

If I'd dared leave the house we'd have come last night. But at daybreak I saw a big black negro hangin' round the back yawd, crawlin' into the ash-cans, just a-lickin' his lips an' layin' fo' us, so —

GEORGIE.

Smiling.

Deah, he was only trying to hide ! He was every bit as scared as you were !

MRS. BYRD.

Scared ! You can't teach me ! Don't I know a mu'derah when I see one ?

To Barrington.

So I woke up Geo'gie an' we got togethah a few things, an' —

GEORGIE.

We had to walk, theah isn't a cab fo' love or money —

MRS. BYRD.

So heah we are, an' I feel like the children o' Israel when they'd crossed the Red Sea. Geo'gie, if you have a pe'fектly clean pocket-handke'chief, you might lend it to me.

GEORGIE.

Wheah's Phil, Mr. Barrington ? I had a telephone message yeste'day saying to keep indoors, but since then —

BARRINGTON.

We spent a cosey little night down on A'senal Street. That's wheah the rumpus sta'ted, you know. The Gove'noh stopped off on his way back to mu'muh a few wo'ds of "Peace on ea'th, good-will t' men" at a mass meetin' enter'tainment which the Mayoh is very gene'ously givin' in front the City Hall. He sent me home to have two drinks, one sandwich, put on my high hat, an' meet the troops, sayin' as I do so, "Welcome, little strangahs ! The freedom of the city is yo's — *if* you can find it. We can't!"

MRS. BYRD.

The troops ! Thank Heaven ! When do they come ?

BARRINGTON.

The 5th Militia will arrive on its pe'sonally conducted little pleasure-trip at — let me see — 1.10.

GEORGIE.

Is the trouble getting wo'se ?

BARRINGTON.

Soberly.

I'm afraid it is, Miss Byrd. They've killed two mo' niggahs down by the rivah — stabbed 'em with jack-knives —

GEORGIE.

Oh — !

BARRINGTON.

That makes fo'teen so fa', not countin' the wounded. You see, it's all this ba'-room riffraff — dam' 'em ! I beg yo' pardon, but it makes a man ashamed of his race t' see such things go on !

GEORGIE.

An' the campaign — ?

BARRINGTON.

Yes, that was all niggah vote an' prohibition. It helped stir 'em up. — An' then the niggah cop decidin' he jus' didn't so't o' feel like arrestin' the coon who bust open that ba'bahshop —

MRS. BYRD.

Quickly.

Negro policeman ! We'll be havin' negro presidents next !

BARRINGTON.

Yeste'day bein' Washington's Bi'thday, the saloons were jam full — every one naturally showin' his deep respect fo' the immo'tal Geo'ge by gettin' thoroughly pifflicated ! The ba'bah shop business so't o' lit the fuse. An' when that niggah, assisted by the p'lice, did a black Houdini act out o' the jail an' on to a train — well, that was the finishin' touch !

GEORGIE.

What are the police doing now ? I haven't seen one !

BARRINGTON.

At the u'gent request of all the othah black pris'onahs — who aren't pa'ticulahly desirous o' helpin' along the celebration by gettin' lynched themselves — the police have fo'med a line in front the jail; an' as fah as lookin' about ninety-nine per cent fiercah than they feel goes, theah makin' one great big hit !

MRS. BYRD.

An' the whole city in the hands of the riotahs ! Well, theah 's one thing to be grateful fo' — the niggahs 'll get a good set-back !

BARRINGTON.

The Gove'noh thinks we're the ones who'll get the set-back — Listen ! Did you —

A newsboy in the street yelling "Extra! Extra! Uprisin' at Weston. Niggahs killin' the whites! Extra!"

MRS. BYRD.

Killing the whites ! Oh, it's *awful* — !

BARRINGTON.

At the window, grimly.

Nevah mind ! The Gove'noh's goin' t' make 'em squeal like sinful guinea-pigs in the hands of an angry God !

GEORGIE.

The *Courant* — ! That's Mr. Noyes' papah !

BARRINGTON.

They're runnin' extras every half-hour now. It's like tossin' sticks o' dynamite into a red-hot stove — keeps the cook a-guessin' ! Oh, theah leadin' the full rich life these days down at the *Courant* offices !

GEORGIE.

Why ?

BARRINGTON.

'Cause Mr. Noyes is a keen politician — that's all. An' as fo' lies — good Lawd ! If the *Courant* said a man was honest, tried an' true, in every sense a Christian gentleman —why, you couldn't have a bettah reason fo' shootin' him at sight !

He lights a cigarette. The telephone bell rings. He goes to it.

Excuse me.

At telephone.

Hello ! — Yes — No, this is his private secretary — Wheah ? — Weston ? — They broke the rail an' — What's that ? Speak a little louder, please. — Escapin' niggahs in the train — yes — how many killed ? — No. — On the 1.10. — No, theah doin' all they can at the jail — I'll tell him — yes, I unde'stand pu'fectly — Good-by.

He rings off, and makes a memorandum at the desk.

They want help out theah, but we can't do a thing till the troops come !

With a laugh.

"Killin' the whites !" I reckon that's the *Courant's* sense o' humor !

MRS. BYRD.

Who has been whispering to Georgie.

An' the ca'ds all out, an' the presents coming in ! Now we'll have to postpone the whole thing ! You can't persuade me the negroes are'nt doing it on pu'pose to annoy us !

GEORGIE.

Please, mothah — don't think of that — it isn't the least use to any one.

BARRINGTON.

I told Mammy Jinny to bring us up some coffee. But the kitchen's so full o' scared coons I reckon she can't come within cookin' distance o' the stove !

GEORGIE.

How is mammy ? Po' ol' thing — !

BARRINGTON.

The Gove'noh's mighty good to her — tries to make up fo' her losin' her gran'son that way. Then she's powe'ful religious, an' I reckon that helps — Heah she is now —

Jinny enters with a tray.

Mammy, at the present moment I'd rathah see you, carryin' yo' coffee-tray, than —

GEORGIE.

Smiling.

Good mawning, mammy !

JINNY.

Lifelessly.

Mawnin', Miss Geo'gie.

MRS. BYRD.

Po' me a cup of yo' coffee, mammy. It's the only thing that'll do my head the slightest good !

BARRINGTON.

Taking his coffee.

Mammy, considah yo'self entitled to a couple o' Ca'negie medals fo' savin' a humble though useless life !

There is a renewed firing outside, and the noise of the mob is heard more loudly.

MRS. BYRD.

Nervously.

Geo'gie, we've got to get away. I can't stand this any mo' !

GEORGIE.

Theah ! That's all right, deah ! Phil'll take care of us — just trust him ! Now drink yo' coffee like a good little mothah — !

BARRINGTON.

Wait ! I hea'd the front do' !

GEORGIE.

It's Phil — !

MRS. BYRD.

Thank Heaven !

Barrington goes to the doorway.

BARRINGTON.

Calling.

That you, suh ?

PHIL.

Downstairs.

Yes.

BARRINGTON.

Mis' Byrd's heah, suh.

PHIL.

Oh, is she ?

There is a moment's pause and then, coming upstairs, he enters the study. He has on a long overcoat, but no hat; he is muddy and rather dishevelled and very tired and quite cheerful.

GEORGIE.

Running over to him.

Yo' po' deah — !

He kisses her hand.

MRS. BYRD.

Oh, Philip, how could you !

PHIL.

To Mrs. Byrd.

Could what, Mrs. Byrd ? —

To Georgie.

I'm glad you came ovah. This is a powe'ful ticklish time !

GEORGIE.

In a lower voice.

You see, yo' violets — they arrived just as usual — not a minute late !

PHIL.

Smiling.

That florist 's an example to all of us just now.
He doesn't let a thing keep him from his wuhk !

GEORGIE.

What happened at the mass-meeting ? Sit down,
deah, you must be dead !

PHIL.

Taking off his coat.

Well, you know our reverend Mayoh is not what
you'd call beloved, an' when he got up to speak —
aftah I'd implor'ed him not to — o' co'se there
was a yell o' "Niggah P'lice !" What about that
Niggah P'lice !" an' such a howlin' that even I,
neah as I was, couldn't heah a wo'd he was tryin'
t' say. Then the bricks began to fly, an' I had t'
take him gently but fir'mly by the a'm an' lead
him to a place o' compa'ative safety. I had my
hat stove in fo' my pains. An' that's all the good
His Honah's mass-meetin' did !

GEORGIE.

Who has meanwhile poured him a cup of coffee.

Now drink this, deah, right off.

PHIL.

Thanks. Simms is makin' me some sandwiches an' —

GEORGIE.

I know you haven't had a bite to eat since last night.

He drinks the coffee.

Is it all gone? Theah! I feel bettah!

BARRINGTON.

Cheerfully.

If it weren't fo' you, suh, I reckon this city would just a-laid down an' quietly croaked — said farewell amid an odo' o' gun-powdah an' ovah-heated niggahs! Wheah the devil do all these pencils go?

He hunts about the desk.

MRS. BYRD.

What all that black and white trash needs is mo' shootin' and less talkin', Phil.

PHIL.

Oh, I don't know! Barrington an' a squad o' p'lice an' I have been movin' round all night, mo' or less, an' I've talked to some effect. We made

'em quit down on Gran' Street, didn't we, ol' man?

GEORGIE.

Impulsively.

Oh, it's — it's wonderful the way yo' — *provin'* yo'self, Phil !

PHIL.

Jocularly.

Heah ! Heah !

To Barrington.

Give me a match, will you ?

GEORGIE.

I don' care ! I'm right glad I'm engaged to such a man ! It shows my judgment, doesn't it, little mothah ?

BARRINGTON.

Smiling.

Or his !

PHIL.

Smiling.

So it takes a race riot to make you appreciate my many good qualities ? That's not ovah complimenta'y, is it ?

There is a rising murmur from the distant crowd, dying away slowly.

MRS. BYRD.

How you an' Phil talk an' joke an' giggle with all that going on out theah, I ce'tainly don' see !

PHIL.

To Mrs. Byrd, gently.

Now, Mrs. Byrd, no worryin' ! When Colonel Knapp an' the 5th Militia arrive, the city'll be quiet as a grave within twenty-fo' hours ! Meanwhile, s'posin' you an' Geo'gie go upstairs an' rest a little. You both look done up — no sleep's bad fo' the complexion ! Mammy, take care o' the ladies, will you ?

MRS. BYRD.

I couldn't sleep a wink ! What d'you take me fo' — ? A piece of Grand Rapids fu'niture ?

PHIL.

Persuasively.

Just lie down an' close yo' eyes. You have no idea how much bettah you'll feel !

MRS. BYRD.

All I hope is that I nevah wake up — but fi'st, Phil, I want you to put these in yo' safe.

She selects several of the bundles she has brought with her.

PHIL.

Weighing one with his hand.

What are they? Feels so't o' heavy!

MRS. BYRD.

Theah my gran'mothah Carter's spoons an' the little box heah is mothah's pea'ls that I've always kept, an' these are my recipes fo' beaten biscuit an' spiced ham an' takin' fruit stains out o' linen an' —

PHIL.

Who has opened the safe.

All right — in they go. This ce'tainly seems like wah-times!

To Georgie.

Wheah are yo' treasures, honey?

GEORGIE.

Don't laugh at me, Phil, but I've brought — (*she shows a box*) the unifo'm gran'fathah wo' when he was killed — at Antietam, you know. I — I didn't want to leave it behind.

PHIL.

Tenderly.

I'm not laughin', honey. An' is that all?

GEORGIE.

Smiling.

One thing mo' ! Guess — !

She holds up a smaller package.

PHIL.

I cain't.

GEORGIE.

You've got to !

PHIL.

An' it is !

False cu'ls — !

GEORGIE.

Phil, yo' horrid ! Come along, mothah !

PHIL.

Tell me, then

GEORGIE.

Yo' letters — stupid !

She runs out the door, the package in her hand.

PHIL.

Calling after her.

I reckon they'ah not wo'th much !

He rings.

MRS. BYRD.

Theah's no use my going ! The very thought of sleep sets me all of a twittah !

JINNY.

Come 'long, Miss Sally. I'll rub yo' haid wif vinegah an' you'll be snorin' fo' yo' know it — sho' yo' will.

MRS. BYRD.

Sighing.

What a comfo't you are, mammy ! — jus' like the ol' times !

As she goes out with Jinny.

If only they were *all* like you — Oh, how thankful I am my po', deah husband is not alive to see his wife an' daughter cooped up like spring chickens by a colo'ed mob —

She weeps a little.

PHIL.

As they disappear.

Good night, Mrs. Byrd — or good mawnin' —
whichevah it is. I'll have yo' called fo' luncheon,
even if I cain't be heah —

Enter Simms.

SIMMS.

Marse Phil?

PHIL.

Looking at his watch.

I'm expectin' the chief o' p'lice any minute. Send
him up as soon as he comes. That's all.

SIMMS.

Yessuh.

He goes out.

PHIL.

To Barrington.

I've got to weed out ev'ry niggah on the fo'ce!
— Any telephone calls after you came back?

BARRINGTON.

Briefly.

Train wrecked at Weston. Eight niggahs killed.
They want mo' men.

PHIL.

We'll send them out when the troops come — Po' me a whiskey, will you, Barrington? Full up.

A newsboy in the street yells, "Extra! White woman shot by niggah! Extra! Extra!"

BARRINGTON.

Getting the drink.

Heah that? Instructive as well as amusin', isn't it?

PHIL.

At the window.

Courant, o' co'se. Run down an' choke him — quick. Take away his papahs.

BARRINGTON.

Will I? Oh, Lord! Honest, I pity that kid from the bottom o' my tendah hea't! Just you wait — He goes out hastily. After a moment the boy's voice stops suddenly.

PHIL.

At the telephone.

318 High, please. That's the *Courant*, isn't it? Yes. — Hello, I want the City Edito', please.

This is Gove'noh Morrow. — Thanks. — City Edito'? This is the Gove'noh. You haven't cut off those extras. Didn't you get wo'd from me? Then why the devil — theah bein' called now, I can heah the boy this minute: "White woman shot by niggahs!" — Mr. Noyes' awdahs — *Dam'* the policy of the papah! — I don't want anothah wo'd now! If you bring out one mo' edition inside o' twenty-fo' hours, I'll place yo' entire staff undah arrest — unde'stand? Now remembah — No, that's all. Good-by.

He rings off.

Enter Barrington.

BARRINGTON.

As he comes in.

The di'ty little son-of-a-gun — he'd sold ovah a hundred copies already! But I fixed him good — he can't sit down fo' a week!

PHIL.

Take a wire, please.

Walking up and down with his whiskey as he dictates.

"Adjutant-General Wood, Fort Worth. Sta't the 7th an' 8th Infantry to be held as rese'ves. Morrow." — Got that?

BARRINGTON.

Yes, suh.

PHIL.

Send it off now.

As Barrington starts for the door.

Wait ! Somethin' else. I want you to go yo'self to Senatoh Long's house — it's somewheah on McAlpin Street —

BARRINGTON.

Surprised.

Long?

PHIL.

Yes, Long. Tell him I want to see him as soon as he can conveniently arrange it. To-night 'll do.

BARRINGTON.

I reckon he'll be su'prised, suh. He's fought mighty ha'd t' get that Prohibition Bill through both Houses — just as if he didn't know all along you were goin' to veto it. He'll probably do some cussin' when he sees you — they say his vocabulary will give a woman fits an' make a strong man weep teahs of envy !

PHIL.

All right. I'll risk it, b'cause —

Simms appears at the door with sandwiches, which he places on the table — back.

SIMMS.

Chief o' p'lice, suh.

PHIL.

Bring him in, Simms.

BARRINGTON.

You won't need me?

PHIL.

No, get off that wire an' the call on the Senatoh. Then finish up the railroad affairs — we can't be hampe'ed that way now.

BARRINGTON.

Very well, suh.

He goes out as Tilton, the chief of police, comes in.

TILTON.

Mawnin', yo' Excellency. Hope I'm not late.

PHIL.

Speaking sharply and quickly.

I've jus' come from the City Hall mass-meetin'
an' all yo' niggah officahs have got to go. The
people resent a niggah p'lice an' I don' blame 'em !

TILTON.

We need all we —

PHIL.

I don't care how few are left. Anyway, the
militia's due heah this mawnin'.

TILTON.

Theah's a good many, suh, so light-colo'ed that —

PHIL.

Tilton, either a man's a niggah or he isn't. Now
go ahead on that basis an' I'll be responsible fo'
the consequences. Unde'stan'?

TILTON.

Very well, suh.

Enter Simms.

SIMMS.

'Scuse me, sah, but Mr. Noyes 's heah an' he say he gottah see you 'bout suthin' impo'tan' !

PHIL.

Send him up.

Exit Simms.

Oh, one thing mo' ! Use every man you can possibly spare from the jail in keepin' the bahs closed. It's pourin' oil on the fire to have —

TILTON.

I sent out yo' awdahs yeste'day, suh.

PHIL.

Well, they haven't been obeyed. Last night I shut up five myself, — within three blocks.

TILTON.

I'll do my best, suh.

PHIL.

All right, good-by.

TILTON.

Good-by, suh.

Enter Noyes.

NOYES.

Hello, Tilton ! Good luck to you !

TILTON.

Thanks, suh.

He goes out.

NOYES.

Shaking hands effusively.

Mawnin', Phil. How goes it? Wuhkin' pretty ha'd — eh ?

PHIL.

Well, that's what I'm heah fo', I s'pose. Have a drink ?

NOYES.

It's an invitation I make a point o' nevah refusin'. — Heah, that's enough ! Thank you, Phil.

Chuckling to himself.

Now if ol' Long were Gove'noh 'stead o' you, I reckon this is the las' taste o' rye we could legally enjoy ! Got his dam' Bill through both Houses, I see. How he did it beats hell !

PHIL.

He was rathah convincin'.

NOYES.

Say, this is good stuff o' yo's, Phil !

Going on indulgently.

Oh, I could a' stopped it in the Senate, but Lawd ! what was the use ? It can't get *round* you an' they ain't strong enough to pass it *ovah* you. Well, this ol' place's in quite a commotion ! If it keeps up all the niggahs 'll be dead or on the run, which'll seem too like Heaven to be true — eh ?

PHIL.

It won't keep me up. The 5th Militia's due heah this mawnin'. That'll end it. An' I've wired fo' two mo' regiments — jus' to be on the safe side.

NOYES.

Listen t' that !

There is a noise of firing and shouting at a distance.

Theah goin' at quite a clip — ain't they ? Did you see that ol' coon they bu'ned last night in a barrel o' asphalt ? Lawd !

Suddenly.

Say, Phil, ain't you feelin' well ?

PHIL.

I'm so't of a wet rag t' day — you see I was out all night.

NOYES.

I reckon this mix-up is a blessin' in disguise — like the kind they have in books ! You'll get a big black bunch fo' the chain-gang an' Gawd knows the State's sho't o' labo' ! An' we're breakin' reco'ds up at the Distille'ies ! People need a heap o' whiskey t' get 'em t' the stage wheah they kill ev'ry niggah they see ! Ho ! ho !

He laughs, glancing keenly at Phil.

Ain't that so ?

PHIL.

Gravely.

I've jus' repeated my awdahs to close ev'ry bah in this city. I think this time they'll go through, Clif.

NOYES.

Well, I hea'd some talk o' that this mawnin' an' — to tell you the truth, that's why I came around. You know, Phil, you mustn't do things like that — they give a bad impression — so't o' Prohibition-Long idea — eh ? See what I'm drivin' at ?

PHIL.

I don't care what impression they give. Those awdahs are not a-goin' to be reve'sed, Clif.

NOYES.

Are you dead sho' they'll do any good?

PHIL.

I'm dead sho' that if it weren't fo' drinkin', the trouble would nevah have sta'ted.

NOYES.

O' co'se, fo' a couple o' days, it don't make so much diff'rence. Altho' I'll lose a right sma't lump o' money, Phil! But I know you've got to do what you think's right — I unde'stand that pu'fectedly! — an' when the troops come we kin drink to niggah damnation in Noyes' Rye an' enjoy it all the mo' fo' our tempo'ary abstinence!

PHIL.

It won't be tempo'ary, Clif. It'll be fo' good.

NOYES.

What's that?

PHIL.

Calmly.

I said it'll be fo' good. Clif, I'm not goin' to veto the Long Bill.

NOYES.

Staring at him.

Yo' not —

PHIL.

Quietly.

I've been givin' the whole thing a good deal o' thought, Clif, the las' six months, an' I've come to some right definite conclusions. This volcano's helped me along conside'able. We brought the niggahs ovah t' this country, Clif — an' I reckon we're responsible fo' them while theah heah. If we've kept 'em like children, we've got to treat 'em like children. An' we're not in the habit, Clif, o' pourin' liquoh down the throats of our infants. Why, day befo' yeste'day I had a count made an' theah were three thousand four hundred and sixty-seven idle niggahs in the fifty-nine saloons o' the levee district ! That was the end, Clif, an' the long an' the sho't of it is — *we're goin' dry!*

NOYES.

Considerately.

Phil, are you sho' yo' wuhk ain't affected you?
If I was you I'd take a nice li'lle nap an' then
you'll wake up feelin' fine !

PHIL.

I'm talkin' straight, Clif.

NOYES.

When you say yo' not intendin' t' veto the Long
Bill, I say yo' clean off yo' head.

PHIL.

Well, I'm goin' to stay off, then. You'll see.

NOYES.

Phil, I —

PHIL.

Firmly.

I'm goin' to let that Bill pass. This State 'll go dry
within a week.

NOYES.

If that Bill goes through, I won' have a cent lef'
in the wo'l'd. I'm in it up to my neck.

PHIL.

I can't help it, Clif; I'm sorry, but I can't help it !

NOYES.

Good Gawd, man, don't you know that's the only reason we elected you? You don't think you got in on yo' good looks, do you? Oh, come off, you can't tu'n coat this way, even if yo' fool enough to want to. It's — it's ridiculous — yes, that's the wo'd — it's dam' ridiculous !

He tries to laugh.

PHIL.

All right, then. But I'll do it jus' the same.

NOYES.

Breathing hard.

D'you really mean that, Phil?

PHIL.

Yes, I mean it.

NOYES.

Close to him and speaking very quietly.

I reckon you wouldn't like it, Phil, if I was t' call you a di'ty coward?

PHIL.

I reckon, Clif, you'd bettah not try !

There is again the noise of distant firing.

NOYES.

But that's what I call a man who climbs ovah his frien's into a big position — an' then kicks 'em away from undah his feet —

PHIL.

Look out now !

NOYES.

His voice rising.

A man who goes back on his wo'd that way — by God, I call him a dam', lyin' —

PHIL.

Blazing up at him.

Stop that or I'll throw you out of the house ! You know as well as me I nevah promised you or Watson a dam' thing ! I made that pu'flectly cleah when I accepted the nomination — that I felt free to act in every way exactly as I pleased ! So if yo' caught now, it's yo' own fault an' you can take every ounce o' blame !

NOYES.

You unde'stood why we ran you into office — theah's no use denyin' it! You meant money in our pockets — come now, you can't go back on us like that! We'll make you —

PHIL.

Interrupting.

If you expected me to use the gove'nment o' this State fo' the protection of yo' whiskey business, you got hold the wrong man — an' that's all!

NOYES.

We elected you on yo' name an' pa'ty loyalty an' the saloon vote. Now you'd bettah look out or you'll lose the bunch!

PHIL.

Rising.

Clif, I'm mighty busy this mawning, an' I reckon we've said all we need to on the subject.

NOYES.

Rising.

No, we ain't — not by a long shot! Phil, are you goin' to pass that Bill?

PHIL.

I ce'tainly am.

NOYES.

I won't let you.

PHIL.

You kept me from doin' my duty once, Clif -- no, I haven't fo'gotten it ! But you can't do it again ! It's no good !

NOYES.

Phil, I give you one las' chance to play square. Come, ol' man, I don' want to fo'ce you, but yo' drivin' me to it.

PHIL.

Fo'ce me — !

He gives a short laugh.

Well, go ahead an' try

NOYES.

Honest, Phil, I —

PHIL.

With sudden fury.

I tell you I'd pass that Bill ovah yo' dead body ! — Now d'you unde'stand ?

NOYES.

Through his teeth.

I reckon we'll see.

He takes from his inside coat pocket a leather-covered wallet which he opens and looks into.

Now I thought I had — no — yes, theah it is !
Lucky I always carry it with me.

He has taken out a neatly folded sheet of paper covered with typewriting. He opens it, glances at it to make sure that it is the right one, and then hands it to Phil. Mildly.

Would you min' readin' that ?

PHIL.

What is it, Clif ? Theah's no use tryin' —

NOYES.

Interrupting.

It's not very long an' mebbe it 'll int'rest you.
Go on — take it !

PHIL.

Phil takes the paper rather scornfully, and runs his eye down the page. There is a little pause.

Why — wait a minute —

He goes nearer the window and reads it again more carefully.

NOYES.

After a moment, as Phil reads it for a third time.

Belle was Jinny's sistah — yo' gran'fathah sold her down to O'leans.

PHIL.

Curiously.

Wheah did you get this? 'Peahs like it might be a copy of somethin'.

NOYES.

In yo' attic — at "Morrow's Rest." 'Membah my huntin' fo' Revolutiona'y papahs — the day Joe White got lynched?

PHIL.

Yes.

NOYES.

Well, this is what I found.

A slight pause.

PHIL.

Sharply.

But what's the point? What if the gal *did* write this to my gran'fathah?

NOYES.

Softly.

What's that she says? "Even though he didn't know I was his mothah." — "You needn't be afraid I'll say a single wo'd."

PHIL.

Well?

NOYES.

Harshly.

Oh, hell! What's the good o' actin' this way?
You know what it means.

PHIL.

Impatiently.

O' co'se I don't!

NOYES.

Laughing nervously.

Well, the boy she talked about theah was yo' fathah — that's all.

There is a brief pause.

PHIL.

With a slight smile.

You silly ass!

NOYES.

I've got the original heah in my pocket. Notice the date — June the eleventh. Ol' Mis' Morrow died June the tenth, eighteen fo'ty-eight, the evenin' her son was bawn. — Oh, I've looked it all up ! If you don't believe me, you can do it yo'self. An' what don't appeah in the reco'ds, the son died, too — that same night, I reckon, if he didn't make his entry as a co'pse — mebbe it was a gal. But anyway, rathah than have "Morrow's Rest" go ovah to my gran'fathah — the man he'd scrapped with ovah a good-lookin' yallah gal — what does that deah ol' So'th'n gentleman do but put that same gal's kid in the place of his wife's, send the mothah to be sol' in the O'leans ma'ket, then light out himself to the Mexican wah an' get killed ! — Now d'ye catch on ?

PHIL.

Incredulous.

Are you tryin' to tell me with a straight face, Clif, that my gran'mothah was a niggah ?

NOYES.

What I'm tellin' you is not only that yo' gran'-

mothah was a niggah, Phil, but that yo' a niggah, too. — Now you've got it square between the eyes !

PHIL.

After a brief pause.

I'll be damned if I don' think you really believe it !

NOYES.

I'm not the so't o' man to wuhk with fac's I don' know down to the ground.

PHIL.

Angrily.

We'll quit talkin' about this, Clif, unde'stan' ? It's gone too fa', an' I don' like it.

NOYES.

I know you don't, Phil — I know you don't. But you'll end by *believin'* it — ma'k my wo'd !

PHIL.

Contemptuously.

What d'you think I am ?

NOYES.

I think yo' a niggah, if you really ask me.

PHIL.

Furiously.

Get out that do' !

NOYES.

Hold on a second ! If yo' so sho' I'm off, what about lettin' me ask yo' mammy a few li'lle things ? She's the Jinny that brought ol' Morrow's lettah. She knows — dam' the ol' niggah ! — she's always known !

PHIL.

You think mammy has been carryin' a thing like that on her soul fo' over sixty yeahs ? Lawd ! —

NOYES.

I don't think — I know. I neahly had it out of her once !

PHIL.

Laughing scornfully.

Well, in that case, ask her anythin' you want ! I'll be rathah tickled to see how she takes it.

NOYES.

All right. Would you mind havin' her in ?

PHIL.

Politely.

Not in the least.

He rings.

Po' Clif, it makes an awful excitin' idea, don't it? I wouldn't be too disappointed, if I was you! Maybe you can think up somethin' else in a few days!

Enter Simms.

Send fo' mammy, Simms. I want her heah.

SIMMS.

Yes, suh. Marse Phil, de kiching's full o' dem or'ney niggahs — clean scared t' death. Dey keep a-comin' in all de time an' eve'ything's so cluttah-up, I cain't —

PHIL.

Interrupting, good-naturedly.

That's all right, Simms. We'll sheltah any one who drops in till the house is plum' full. Now send up Jinny.

SIMMS.

Resignedly.

Yessuh.

He goes out.

NOYES.

Calmly.

"When I put my baby in Jinny's a'ms —"

*Breaks off.*Lawd ! I reckon I know that lettah by hea't !
Now what d'you s'pose it means ?

PHIL.

At the table, back.

How the devil should I know ?

Pouring a drink.

I'm not even sho' you found it in our attic, Clif.

NOYES.

Starting.

Are you callin' me a —

PHIL.

Smiling a little.

Have a drink, Clif. Remembah when the Long Bill goes through we won't get anothah chance !

NOYES.

Wiping his forehead.

You can't scare me — wheah's that ol' woman?
She's slower'n tah !

PHIL.

Pleasantly.

Mammy's gettin' on in yeahs. Takes her time
climbin' stairs.

There is firing outside, at a distance, and some shouts.

God, I wish those troops were heah ! We're jus'
wastin' time — that's it, wastin' time !

Jinny enters and stands silently by the door.

Oh, thank you, mammy. Mr. Noyes heah wants
t' ask you some questions — don't you, Clif ?

NOYES.

Yes, what I want t' know is this. I —

PHIL.

Interrupting.

Jus' a second, Clif.

To Jinny.

Are the ladies lyin' down — pu'fectly comfo'table ?

JINNY.

Never taking her eyes away from Noyes.

Miss Sally done gone t' sleep, Marse Phil. I dunno 'bout Miss Geo'gie.

PHIL.

To Noyes.

Well, go on.

NOYES.

After a brief pause.

How old are you, mammy?

JINNY.

Dunno, sah.

NOYES.

Evah had a youngah sistah?

JINNY.

'Peahs lak I might have.

NOYES.

Evah had a youngah sistah named Belle?

JINNY.

Dunno, sah. Mebbe an' mebbe not.

PHIL.

Kindly.

Try to think, mammy. It's all right.

NOYES.

Ol' Marse Phil — the one that got killed in Mexico — you remembah him, don't you ?

JINNY.

Yes, sah.

NOYES.

'Membah his wife dyin' the summah he went away ?

JINNY.

Yes, sah.

NOYES.

He was a right han'some young man — eh ? Looked like Phil heah ? So't o' wild an' careless-like ?

JINNY.

Yes, sah.

NOYES.

Now wasn't he an' ol' Hank Noyes both stuck on Belle ? Didn't they have a big scrap ovah her ?

Didn't ol' Marse Phil get her in the end an' give her a swell eddication an' treat her almos' like she was white?

JINNY.

I — dunno, sah.

NOYES.

An' then didn't he sell her down t' O'leans on June the twelfth, eighteen fo'ty-eight, through an agent named Kimball?

His voice has deepened without changing tone.

JINNY.

Dunno, sah. I cain't — I cain't 'membah way back — no mo'.

NOYES.

You remembe'ed last summah all right! Why did he sell her down the rivah?

JINNY.

I tell yo' I dunno, sah — 'deed I dunno —

NOYES.

To Phil.

You ask her.

PHIL.

Gently.

If you do happen t' recall it, mammy, you might as well tell him.

JINNY.

I dunno — I reckon he done got tired o' her —

NOYES.

Triumphant.

Now I got you ! You admit Belle — how's that — Phil ? How's that ?

PHIL.

Mammy, is even this much of it true ? Did my gran'fathah have a quadroon gal named Belle ? Was she yo' sistah, mammy ?

JINNY.

Dazed.

Marse Phil — I — I dunno what I done say —

PHIL.

Patiently.

Wait, mammy. Theah's no hurry. It's all right ! Think quietly. Mr. Noyes heah 's got hold of a

story an' I want you t' help me show him it's all nonsense !

NOYES.

I know why he sold her down the rivah. 'Tweren't 'cause he got tired of her, it was 'cause he was 'fraid she might tell 'bout —

JINNY.

Shaking her head violently as she interrupts.

I dunno nuffin' — Marse Phil, why you let him talk t' me —

NOYES.

She ain't hea'd me out, but she seems t' feel what's comin' jes' the same !

JINNY.

Marse Phil, Miss Sally an' Miss Geo'gie — they sho' want me upstairs —

PHIL.

Jus' a minute, mammy. You don't know why my gran'fathah sold Belle down to O'leans, do you ?

JINNY.

No, Marse Phil. 'Deed I don' — I sw'ar I don', Marse Phil —

NOYES.

Furiously.

Then I'll tell you ! It was 'cause he had to get her out of the way or he'd live in the risk o' havin' her claim her son — Phil's fathah theah — an' you know it, you ol' devil, you know it's well's me !

JINNY.

Shrilly.

I dunno — nevah had no sistah — Belle weren't nevah sol' down t' Oleans — Dunno nuffin' — *nuffin'* —

NOYES.

Through his teeth.

I'll make you —

JINNY.

Still shrilly.

Marse Clif mus' be mistook — dat's sho' — no, I dunno nuffin' 'bout dat —

PHIL.

To Noyes, as he shrugs his shoulders.

Theah ! You see !

To Jinny.

That'll be all, mammy. You can go.

JINNY.

Yes, Marse Phil.

She turns unsteadily to go out, but Noyes suddenly seizes her by the wrist.

NOYES.

D'you think you can fool me's easy's all that?
D'you mean t' say you've fo'gotten the time when
you neahly tol' Phil yo'self? That night up
at Morrow's Rest, when the dawgs were aftah yo'
Joe, trackin' him down? — an' you knew if Phil
kep' him in the house he'd be safe? — Why, you
had the wo'ds on the tip o' yo' tongue — "You've
got to keep him heah — 'cause he's yo' own *kin* —"

PHIL.

Quickly.

Quit it, Clif!

NOYES.

Continuing.

But you didn't say 'em, you dam' ol' piece of rock! You stood theah an' let those wa'dens pull off Joe, an' you knew what would happen — you knew that mob would tie him to a tree an' po' kerosene on his clo's an' —

JINNY.

At last finding her voice.

Marse Phil — !

PHIL.

Instantly, pulling Noyes away.

Dam' you, Clif, what d'you mean by talkin' that way to the po' ol' thing? Heah I've been doin' all I could t' drive away those memories, an' now you come along with —

NOYES.

Seeing that Jinny is turning towards the door.

Wait a second, mammy! Phil, read her that lettah — the one I've just given you — Belle's lettah. Make her listen to it an' then if she don't speak up, I'll —

PHIL.

As he hesitates.

Well?

NOYES.

I won't say anothah wo'd — I'll let the mattah drop. How's that?

PHIL.

Sternly.

No, she's had enough. Mammy, that'll do, I'll —

NOYES.

Yo' scared! You don' dare! You know she'd tell!

PHIL.

Tell? Tell what? She don't know anythin' to tell!

NOYES.

Then why can't you read that lettah? What diff'rence does it make?

PHIL.

Shrugging his shoulders.

That's so. Wait just a moment, mammy. Mr. Noyes wants me to read you somethin' an' then he won't bothah you any mo'.

NOYES.

Go ahead. Now listen, mammy — are yo' listenin'?

PHIL.

Quit naggin' her, Clif! Mammy, it won't take mo'n a jiffy.

Reading from the typewritten sheet.

“ June eleventh — Night. Jinny has told me it is true. Kimball is comin’ at eight in the mawnin’ an’ you are sellin’ me down the rivah. I think I could crawl t’ you on my han’s an’ knees if you would talk t’ me — jus’ once mo’ — ”

Breaking off.

Look-aheah, Clif, what’s the good o’ goin’ on? It’s a dam’ indecency — !

NOYES.

Finish her up — she ain’t long !

He is looking at mammy, who listens stolidly.

PHIL.

With a slight shrug.

Oh, well — let’s see, wheah was I?

Reading.

“ — jus’ once mo’. I have done everythin’ you wanted, but when I put my baby in Jinny’s a’ms fo’ her to take up to the house, I so’t o’ hoped I could see him sometimes, even though he did not know I was his mothah — An’ now you are sellin’ me down theah. I’m not askin’ you to change yo’ mind, ’cause I know you won’t — yo’ made that way. I’m goin’ to obey you now, just like

I always have. I'm goin' down the rivah — though we both know what that means. Honey, you needn't be scared I'll say a single wo'd — I want you nevah t' think of me again — theah's no use botherin' any mo' —"

Breaking off.

Clif, I don't believe this !

NOYES.

Through his teeth.

Go on — *go on !*

PHIL.

Reading.

" — theah's no use botherin' any mo'. But this is what I am tryin' to make you feel — fo' yo' own sake, be good to yo' baby. Don' treat him like you treated me. Make it all up to him, 'cause if you don't — somethin' dreadful is goin' t' happen. I don't know what, but I can feel it comin' — it's someweah in the da'k — outside. Dearest, I reckon yo' smilin', but this is gospel truth an' I so much want you t' know in time. It's gettin' late. My candle is neahly gone, so I'll say good-by. If theah is a God, He'll make you remembah yo' son an' fo'get his

mothah. An' now, dearest, I hope you don't mind my sayin' fo' the last time those wonde'ful wo'ds — 'cause even now they'ah wonde'ful — *I love you — I love you —*"

JINNY.

Who has at first listened stolidly, then with strained attention, now bursts forth.

It's Belle a-talkin' ! It's her very own v'ice — ! Oh, Gohd ! Oh, Gohd ! Seems lak the yeahs done come back — !

She breaks into dry, racking sobs.

PHIL.

After a pause, staring at her, the paper in his hand.

Mammy !

JINNY.

Falling on her knees beside him, taking his hand.

Marse Phil — w'en yo' stood theah — readin' Belle's lettah — I sw'ar I saw her, 'way, 'way back one turr'ble hot night, lyin' in bed, a-nussin' her baby — wif de lightnin' commencin' t' jump an' ev'rythin' quiet an' so't o' scarey. — Seems if I didn't dare 'stu'b her, but w'en I done say what she gotteh do — an' she lift de li'lle cryin'

thing an' put him in my a'ms an' den covah up her face quick in de bedclo's — why, I cain't fo'get — I done try all dis time an' I cain't — 'deed I cain't, Marse Phil — what yo' lookin' at dat way — Marse Phil — Marse Phil —

Her ejaculations die away into a terrified silence.

Phil stands looking off into space, mechanically stroking her hair.

PHIL.

Looking down at her with an effort, speaking gently.

An' my fathah was — her son ?

Jinny does not answer, her head sinks. There is a pause. Then he raises her to her feet.

I think the ladies may be needin' you upstairs, mammy. You'dbettah go. — Don' say anythin' to them about this. You've kept still fo' sixty odd yeahs — (*smiling at her*), I reckon you can do it a little longah ?

JINNY.

Yessuh — yessuh.

She edges towards the door.

PHIL.

Do you know — what — happened to Belle ?

JINNY.

No, Marse Phil — dat man come in de mawnin' an' I nevah heah 'bout her no mo'.

PHIL.

After a slight pause.

Well, that's all, mammy.

JINNY.

As she hobbles out, trembling and gasping.

Belle's lettah — Gohd, seems lak yo' nevah done let things end — !

PHIL.

To Noyes.

Have you got the original with you? I want to see it.

NOYES.

Who distrusts his calmness.

Sho', Phil — sho'! But — you know —

PHIL.

Rather scornfully.

Oh, I won't throw it into the fire! What's the good? It's the truth that counts — an' you can't kill it as easy as that!

NOYES.

O' co'se — o' co'se !

He hastens to take a faded envelope from his wallet, which he hands to Phil.

PHIL.

Looking at the address.

“Mr. Morrow —” Ol’ fashioned, pretty writin’, isn’t it? They don’t make M’s like that any mo’ !

NOYES.

Judicially.

You ce’tainly kin eddicate them yallah gals within an inch o’ theah lives !

PHIL.

Picking up something that has fallen from the pages of the letter.

What’s that? — Why, it’s a rose !

He sniffs it instinctively.

Theah’s no fragrance left. It’s a white rose —

He turns away suddenly, with a little choke.

NOYES.

I reckon he stuck it in himself — latah on. She don't say nothin' 'bout no roses in the lettah.

PHIL.

Putting the letter back into the envelope, handling it very tenderly.

Po' thing ! Po' li'lle thing !

Looking up and still speaking under his breath, as if in the presence of the dead.

Why didn't he marry some one else — aftah his wife died ? He could have had othah children — it would have been all right !

NOYES.

'Cause at the end o' that same month he had t' join the a'my in Mexico. Theah weren't no time. Or mebbe he didn't want to.

PHIL.

Still under his breath.

An' he died gloriously — killed in battle ! Why, we have his swo'd hangin' in the library up at "Morrow's Rest" — !

NOYES.

Nervously, eying him.

So you have.

PHIL.

Speaking almost to himself.

Killed in battle — ! I reckon that's gettin' off easy ! — An' I'm his namesake — !

NOYES.

Clearing throat uncomfortably.

Queer, ain't it ?

PHIL.

To Noyes.

Why didn't he bu'n this himself ? Why did he leave such a thing behind ?

NOYES.

Trying to be matter-of-fact.

I expect he was powe'ful stuck on her. Don't fo'get that ol' flowah ! — Yes, she must 'a' been a likely lookin' gal all right — he'd done a heap in eddicatin' her an' that so't o' stuff. She gave him her kid when his own wife went back on him — p'raps he wanted t' remembah her, felt so't o' —

sorry he'd let her go — no, you nevah kin tell what a man'll do aftah a thing like that !

PHIL.

Crushing the letter in his hand with a sudden spasm of rage.

Dam' him ! Dam' him !

NOYES.

Perturbed.

Heah now — le's have that back, or theah won't be nothin' left !

As Phil gives him the letter.

I reckon it's no good cussin', Phil. S'pose we talk things ovah — nice an' quiet ! Mebbe we kin arrange everythin' t' suit all pa'ties ! Set down, Phil, set down !

PHIL.

Half to himself.

So I'm a niggah — oh !

NOYES.

Now 'bout that Prohibition Bill — you won' feel like passin' it, will you ?

PHIL.

Still not hearing.

A niggah —!

NOYES.

Drop that fo' a moment an' talk business, can't you? — Phil, you've got to veto that Bill.

PHIL.

Turning to him vacantly.

What's that? — I don't see —

NOYES.

The Long Prohibition Bill. You said you were goin' t' pass it. I reckon you've changed yo' mind?

PHIL.

Sharply.

O' co'se not — why should I?

NOYES.

After a brief pause.

B'cause now, Phil, my boy — well, t' put it plain, now you've got t' do 's I say.

PHIL.

Looking at him.

Oh, I unde'stand.

NOYES.

Gently.

I wondah if you realize what all this means. It means that you ain't nobody — strictly speakin'. Yo' prope'ty, "Morrow's Rest," eve'ythin' you inherited, belong by rights to me. Why, you ain't even got yo' name. Can you grasp it, ol' man?

PHIL.

Dazed.

Wait — I — (*with an odd smile*) — it'll take a long time —

NOYES.

Going on.

Now I don' want t' use an unfair advantage, Phil — that ain't my style! You kin keep everythin' an' I'll nevah let on a wo'd — not a single wo'd, s'elp me Gawd! — if you'll jes' do this one li'lle thing fo' me!

PHIL.

What's that?

NOYES.

Veto the Long Bill.



PHIL.

Irritably.

Clif, I can't talk about that now — I —

NOYES.

Gently.

I know you've had a knock-out, Phil, but this is too impo'tant to slip by. — Now I don' want yo' prope'ty — although by the law it's mine already — I'm not sayin' anythin' 'bout yo' claim to the inheritance that's made you what you are. I'm not sayin' that if things had been as they should be, I'd stand heah a different man !

His emotions rising at the thought.

If I hadn't sweated blood fo' ev'ry dollah I've ea'ned, d'you think I couldn't 'a' done a few things myself ? Oh, I'm not grudgin' you 'em ! But if I sta'ted life with what was really mine, I reckon now I'd have as much as you — I reckon *I'd* be looked up to by the South ! *I'd* be the man to marry Miss Geo'gie ! I —

PHIL.

Pulling himself together.

Theah's no use talkin', Clif. I won't veto the Long Bill.

NOYES.

Come now, you —

PHIL.

Whatevah I am, I'm Gove'noh o' this State an' bound t' do my best by the job — no mattah what happens — *no mattah what happens* —

NOYES.

Slowly growing angry.

I've tried to be decent t' you, Phil, but yo' makin' it right ha'd !

PHIL.

I know what yo' aftah ! You think you've got the screws on me ! Well, you'd bettah not count on that — unde'stand ?

NOYES.

Calmly.

Phil, I don't think you quite realize what a nice big bust-up it'd be if people knew they had a niggah Gove'noh !

PHIL.

So yo' tryin' to make me veto that Bill, even though I know prohibition's the right thing ?

NOYES.

I ce'tainly am lookin' in that direction.

PHIL.

Furiously.

Well, I won't do it ! If I'm a niggah myself, that's all the mo' reason I should help the *othah* niggahs !

NOYES.

Black with rage.

It is, is it ? Not if —

Controlling himself with a great effort.

Phil, undah the ci'cumstances, you cain't be ex-
pected t' see things in theah right light. You need
time t' think 'em ovah. That Bill 'll be sent up
to you Friday. I'll call that afte'noon. Theah's
three days to come to yo' senses. How's that ?

PHIL.

Laughing almost hysterically.

Three days — oh, that's good, that is !

NOYES.

I'm right sorry fo' you, Phil, but if you give in

jes' this once, things'll go 's smooth 's if nothin' had evah happened.

PHIL.

Wait ! Some one's comin' !

There is a brief pause.

Barrington appears at the doorway, a telegram in his hand.

BARRINGTON.

Excuse me, suh, but heah's a wire from Colonel Knapp. They've caught the mawnin' express an' they'll be heah at eleven eighteen.

PHIL.

Oh — will they — ?

BARRINGTON.

He says he'll come directly to you, suh, fo' instructions.

PHIL.

Eleven eighteen —

Glancing at watch.

That's pretty soon now. Be at the station with

the moto' an' bring him up heah 's quick as you can. We don't want t' lose a second !

There is heard outside the approaching sound of the same little party of drunken rioters who passed at the beginning of the act.

BARRINGTON.

You won't, suh, if I'm drivin' that cah !

He goes to the window.

PHIL.

Calmly.

Good-by, Clif.

NOYES.

S' long, Phil. See you Friday.

He goes out.

BARRINGTON.

At the window.

Heah comes that same crowd, suh, that frightened the ladies.

The noise advances.

Phil stands silent and quiet.

The mob stops, yelling, in front of the house.

I'm blamed if theah not a-tryin' t' cheer you ! — the slight difficulty bein' they can't yell an' stand

up at the same time. Some choose one an' some the othah. Deah me ! How touchin' is the devotion of the lowah classes — especially when they'ah drunk !

There is an outburst in the street, punctuated by revolver shots.

PHIL.

What are they firin' at ?

BARRINGTON.

Nothin' pa'ticulah. It's jus' the pure, sweet playfulness an' childlike enthusiasm brought on by mixin' bad whiskey with beer — that's all !

Georgie appears at the door, pale and quiet. She has taken off her hat.

GEORGIE.

At the door.

Phil — ?

Phil starts at the sound of her voice and turns to her.

PHIL.

Yes, deah ?

GEORGIE.

Those men outside — is theah any dangah ? Ought I to wake mothah ? She's in the back room and hasn't hea'd.

PHIL.

Gently.

No, they'ah jus' drunk, Geo'gie. An' anyway,
they like me too well t' break my windows.

BARRINGTON.

Coming from the window with a laugh.

They'ah movin' on. — Don't you get scared now,
Miss Byrd. Yo' as safe heah as you would be in
State's Prison !

GEORGIE.

Oh, I'm not scared — it was only fo' mothah
that I —

PHIL.

You haven't been able to sleep ?

GEORGIE.

I tried, but — I couldn't.

PHIL.

Then come in. I have somethin' to tell you.

GEORGIE.

Smiling.

It mus' be impo'tant — to take up yo' time now !

PHIL.

It is.

To Barrington.

Barrington, drop in at P'lice Headqua'tahs on yo' way to the station an' see if Tilton's thrown out ev'ry niggah on the fo'ce — I don't care how light his color is or how badly he's needed.

BARRINGTON.

And shall I bring the Colonel up heah as soon as he comes ?

PHIL.

Yes — an' theah's no speed law when the city's riotin', either.

BARRINGTON.

Then heah's wheah I bust loose ! I only hope I get him heah alive ! See you latah, Miss Byrd !

PHIL.

Oh, Barrington, did Senatoh Long answah my message ?

BARRINGTON.

Theah ! I knew I'd fo'gotten somethin' ! — He said he'd call this evenin' at seven.

PHIL.

Then put it down on my list. That's all now.

BARRINGTON.

Very well, suh. Good-by !

He bows to Georgie and goes out.

PHIL.

Closing the sliding doors.

Sit down, deah. I'm afraid yo' neahly done up.

GEORGIE.

Senatoh Long coming to see you? Why, that isn't the old prohibitionist, is it?

PHIL.

That's the one.

GEORGIE.

I hope yo' not cultivating the man's acquaintance, Phil. You know he'll use it against you latah on!

She is half smiling, half serious.

PHIL.

I must, deah.

GEORGIE.

Now, Phil, yo' too kind to these people! Oh, I know —! An' aftah all he's done to you! — Ugh! — What is it they call him? "The White Niggah?"

PHIL.

After a slight pause.

The reason I've got to see him, Geo'gie, is b'cause I've gone ovah to his side on the Prohibition Bill.

GEORGIE.

What?

PHIL.

It's the only way in which we can safely attack the niggah problem. My deah, it's got to come.

GEORGIE.

But Phil —

PHIL.

I know you don' like the idea o' my changin', honey, but you wouldn't want me to hold on to somethin' I didn't believe — jus' to seem consistent?

GEORGIE.

Agast.

It's not that! It's — it's *he!* Why, you know what he stands fo'! He has negroes in his house — he calls on their wives — he treats them just as he would you an' me — ! The very idea of it somehow — Oh! — Phil, yo' not goin' to take up with a — a man like *that?*

PHIL.

I can't help it, deah.

GEORGIE.

Revolted.

If you don't look out, they'll be calling *you* that same thing.

PHIL.

What?

GEORGIE.

“White Niggah!”

There is a brief pause; then, impulsively.

Oh, Phil, I couldn't beah it! You know how I feel!

There is another pause.

PHIL.

Harshly, as he turns away.

Geo'gie, I wanted to see you b'cause I have some-thin' — very unpleasant — to tell you. P'raps I ought to wait an' think it ovah b'fo' I say any-thin'. But you've got to know sometime — an' if I put it off my ne've might go back on me.

GEORGIE.

In a different tone.

What is it, Phil?

PHIL.

You must break our engagement, Geo'gie — right away.

A slight pause.

GEORGIE.

I don't see the joke.

She tries to smile.

PHIL.

I reckon theah isn't any joke, deah.

GEORGIE.

What's the mattah?

PHIL.

I've decided that we nevah could make each othah happy.

Quickly.

Oh, I'm not thinkin' 'bout myself! — It's all fo' you, Geo'gie, an' —

GEORGIE.

Yo' keeping something back. And you've got to tell me, Phil, it's my right — it's any girl's right!

PHIL.

I can't, honey —

A pause.

GEORGIE.

Almost whispering.

I've offended you somehow, but —

PHIL.

No, you haven't, deah — that's ridiculous!

GEORGIE.

With a little cry and movement towards him.

Phil, I didn't mean it! I wouldn't do anything in the wo'l'd to hu't you — I love you so much that —

PHIL.

Stop it, Geo'gie — don't !

GEORGIE.

I know ! — it was because I was shocked at yo' goin' ovah to that man. Deah, I don't — really mind. I know yo' doing the right thing — because you couldn't do anything else, an' —

PHIL.

Half under his breath.

I can't stand this —

GEORGIE.

Fo'give me, honey, won't you ?

PHIL.

Pulling himself together.

Don't be foolish, Geo'gie, if you can help it ! It's — not you — it's — it's — me !

GEORGIE.

After a pause, quietly.

I see. You've stopped loving me. I'm sorry —

She turns blindly towards the door.

PHIL.

Controlling an impulse to take her in his arms.

Stopped lovin' you? If I only had, it would be a million times easiah fo' both of us! But I haven't, Georgie — I haven't —

GEORGIE.

Terrified.

Then why don't you tell me what it is?

As he looks at her.

Oh, Phil, I'm afraid!

PHIL.

After another pause.

I will tell you. — Only — it's a ha'd thing to say. Please sit down.

He hands a chair for her, which she takes.

GEORGIE.

Go on, Phil.

PHIL.

Slowly, selecting his words.

Just now you called Senatoh Long "The White Niggah."

GEORGIE.

Looking at him.

Every one does. It's only his nickname.

PHIL.

Well, pretty soon people 'll be callin' *me* that —

GEORGIE.

Quickly.

I don't mind, Phil ! Truly I don't !

PHIL.

An' it won't be a nickname — it'll be the truth.

A pause, during which they look at each other silently. Then he turns away, unable to endure her eyes any longer.

GEORGIE.

Phil, I don't think I unde'stand — quite —

PHIL.

I know it's ha'd to grasp. It — it took me some time myself.

GEORGIE.

Why should they really call you — that ?

PHIL.

I'm afraid it's because I *am* one, deah.

A pause.

GEORGIE.

Conventionally.

Phil, don't be absu'd !

PHIL.

Now listen. I'll try to be sho't an' plain. My gran'mothah Morrow died when her son was bawn, an' the son died, too. Gran'fathah was on the point o' joinin' the a'my in Mexico — you know he was killed down theah — an' t' keep "Morrow's Rest" from goin' ovah to the Noyes side o' the family, he took his quadroon gal's baby an' said it was his wife's. You see, she was dead an' couldn't exactly deny it.

GEORGIE.

What — ?

PHIL.

Whose tone is perfectly business-like.

The quadroon gal was Mammy Jinny's sistah. He sold her down the rivah t' get her out of the

way — you see, it's a nasty business ! Fathah — well, fathah was her son. Clif Noyes found a lettah that she wrote, an' it set him on the track, an' heah — jus' now — mammy let out the whole thing. So you see — what I am — (*he is drumming on the desk with a pencil*) — an' I reckon that's why we've got to break off the engagement.

Meanwhile, the sound of a military band playing "The Stars and the Stripes" is heard far away, gradually growing nearer.

GEORGIE.

Staring at him in stony astonishment.

I don't believe it.

PHIL.

Neither did I. But Clif showed me her lettah — he'd wuhked it all out — an' then, you know — mammy —

GEORGIE.

I don't believe it.

PHIL.

My deah, I wish to God you didn't have to !

GEORGIE.

Tossing her head in agony.

I say, I don't believe it !

PHIL.

Suddenly clinching his hands.

D'you think I'd tell you if it weren't the truth?

GEORGIE.

Gasping.

You mean that yo' a —

PHIL.

Quickly.

Don't say it, please.

GEORGIE.

A negro — !

PHIL.

Geo'gie !

GEORGIE.

Burying her face in her hands with a cry.

Oh — !

PHIL.

With wild passion.

Geo'gie, I can't break it off — I thought I could, but I can't ! Why, I'm the same as I was b'fo' — I haven't changed a mite — I'm the man you've been in love with all these yeahs. I tell you I'm

white — I'm all Morrow — theah's ha'dly a drop o' the othah ! We'll hush it up — you love me — we'll go right on as if nothin' had happened — it's been kept all this time — it'll go on bein' kept. Oh, I'll arrange with Clif — an' mammy'll nevah tell — Honey ! — Geo'gie ! heah's the chance to show how much you care — an' you'll take it, — yes, you will ! — Love's the only thing to carry us across, an', thank God ! it's goin' to !

GEORGIE.

No — don't — !

PHIL.

It's all right — you love me an' it's all right ! Nothin' in the wo'l'd can stop us now — my precious — my little precious — my wife —

By this time he has her in his arms and is kissing her frantically.

Georgie, with a scream, tears away, flinging herself in the big chair — front-left — where she buries her face against the sides.

Geo'gie, yo' not goin' back on me ? No, yo' not — I won't let you —

He tries to secure her hand.

GEORGIE.

Shrinking in disgust.

Let go — keep away —

PHIL.

What d'you mean ?

GEORGIE.

Losing control of herself.

Stop it ! Don't come neah me —

PHIL.

Geo'gie, what are you doin' ?

GEORGIE.

In a paroxysm of nervous horror.

Let me go ! — Stop it ! *Stop it, I say !*

She tries to run for the door, but he reaches it first and blocks her way.

PHIL.

Beside himself, uttering a cry.

A-ah ! Yo' jus' like all the othahs ! — You've twisted me round yo' fingah fo' the fun of it — God in Heaven, why couldn't I have seen the truth

when you lay in my a'ms an' looked up at me an' said — "I love you — Nobody's evah loved anyone the way I love you — !" If I'd only known — if I'd only felt theah was nothin' but lies in yo' smiles an' yo' kisses —

GEORGIE.

Screaming.

Oh !

She covers her ears, but he seizes her hands in both of his, and holds them tight. She cowers before him.

PHIL.

Swept on.

An' that's the love you were always talkin' about ! I thought it was the biggest thing on ea'th — an' now wheah is it ? You po', shallow little creature, how do you dare say the wo'd ? Yes, you can stand heah an' shake an' shuddah, but my gran'mothah — d'you heah ? — my niggah gran'mothah — that quadroon slave gal ! — could have given you points right an' left how to play the game ! She passed up her child an' her life — she went to hell without a sound — an' her last wo'ds to the man that made her do it were — "I love you ! "

GEORGIE.

With another cry.

A — ah !

She tries desperately to get away from him.

PHIL.

Gathering her to him in spite of her struggles.

No, I didn't mean that, da'lin' — I don't know what I'm sayin' — fo'give me — Geo'gie — you gotteh fo'give me — you won't go back on me — you won't leave me — don't — fo' Christ's sake — Geo'gie — !

Just here there is a knock on the door, and it is immediately opened by Barrington, who stands ready to show in Colonel Knapp and two other officers in his regiment. As the doors are opened, Phil lets Georgie go. She rushes past the men — who stand back with an "Excuse me." For a moment, unseen by the others, Phil chokes, then, with a supreme effort, controls himself and faces the Colonel as the latter smilingly enters the room.

BARRINGTON.

Heah's the Colonel, suh !

COLONEL KNAPP.

Cordially.

His Excellency? Well, I reckon yo' right glad to see us!

Shaking hands.

Now, I think if I know briefly what pa'ts o' the city are givin' the mos' trouble, we can —

And, as he speaks,

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

411

ACT III

The private office of the Governor at the Capitol, February 26th, afternoon. It is an official-looking, handsome room, high-ceilinged, light, and airy, furnished with quiet luxury. It suggests throughout the presence of the State.

At the right is a large, highly carved, white marble fireplace and mantel-shelf, over which hangs a portrait of a former statesman. There is a fire burning quietly in the grate. Along the back are, at regular intervals, three long, round-topped French windows, opening out upon a narrow, formal balcony, which seems to run the whole length of the room outside and has a conventional balustrade of decorated ironwork. On these windows are stately, looped-up curtains and lambrequins of claret-colored brocade. Through them can be seen a few glimpses of the tops of trees and, beyond, the roofs of the city. — The Capitol thus stands upon an eminence. — At the left are large, old-fashioned double doors with glass door knobs, opening in. The woodwork of the room is black walnut, highly polished. There is a walnut wainscot; a grey, imitation "marble" paper; and then a cove. The ceiling is

elaborate stucco; from its centre hangs a huge crystal chandelier. The carpet is claret-colored and completely covers the floor.

Near the centre is a large, rectangular, black-walnut desk, flat-topped. On it are arranged, in an orderly way, files of letters, papers, heavy elaborate inkstand, etc. The telephone seems almost out of place in this atmosphere, but it is there, nevertheless. Facing the desk is a black-walnut arm-chair; there is another chair on the opposite side. Halfway, facing the fireplace, is an old-fashioned black-walnut sofa. Between the windows, back to wall, are two black-walnut chairs. The upholstery is claret-colored throughout. On either side of the double doors are portraits of former governors — very proud, clasping rolls of paper, with thunder-storms imminent in background.

As the curtain rises Phil, wearing a frock-coat, is seated at the desk going over a large pile of correspondence. Barrington is seated opposite him, across the desk, note-book in hand.

PHIL.

Opening a letter and glancing over it.

Dedicatin' the new college at Palme'sville — want me t' give an address — h'm — !

BARRINGTON.

When is it, suh?

PHIL.

April the eighth.

BARRINGTON.

Taking the letter.

Oh, yes ! Goin' t' do it ?

PHIL.

I don't know. I'm not sho' whethah I approve o' niggah colleges.

BARRINGTON.

You used t' be right sho' you didn't, suh ! 'Mem-bah when —

PHIL.

Interrupting.

File that till Monday. I'll make up my mind befo' then. — Lawd, what a bunch o' mail !

BARRINGTON.

Accumulated some durin' the riots.

PHIL.

Well, it's lucky they didn't last much longah ! As it is, it'll take us a good week t' catch up with all this.

Opening another.

Heah's the *Courant* again!

He reads.

BARRINGTON.

Chuckling.

Millah tol' me this mawnin' that the papah would make a little jou'ney to the home o' the receivah in less'n a month. Theah stock's doin' a submarine act — nevah once comin' up t' breathe.

PHIL.

Theah beggin' me t' quit writin messages 'bout 'em t' the othah papahs. Down on theah ham-bones, are they? Well, I reckon the city knows wheah t' lay a good big share o' blame fo' all this cyclone!

Tossing over the letter.

Teah that up. Theah's no answah. What time is it?

BARRINGTON.

Glancing at the clock over Phil's shoulder.

Neahly half aftah three, suh.

PHIL.

Pushing back the mail.

We'll stop till t'-morrow. My head's gettin' soft. Let's see — what train are the troops leavin' on?

BARRINGTON.

The five fifteen, suh.

PHIL.

Then I'll be havin' a call from Colonel Knapp
b'fo' that. Many people outside?

BARRINGTON.

'Bout ten, suh. No one impo'tant, except —

PHIL.

Interrupting.

Send 'em off, then. I'll be busy the rest o' the
afte'noon with appointments.

BARRINGTON.

What about Mr. Noyes, suh? He says he tol'
you he was comin' to-day.

PHIL.

You've asked him to wait?

BARRINGTON.

Yes, suh, but —

PHIL.

As he hesitates.

Well?

BARRINGTON.

He didn't — exactly — jump up an' down fo' — joy at the prospect, suh. In fact his tempah seemed a trifle strained. He's rollin' his eyes an' frothin' at the mouth till I wanted t' send out fo' a bib — or a plumbah !

PHIL.

I'll see him latah on. Wheah's the Long Bill? I thought I —

He searches about.

Oh, theah it is! I want t' look ovah it again b'fo' signin'. Now, when the Senatoh comes, bring him right in.

BARRINGTON.

Gathering up his note-books, letters, etc.

All right, suh. Anythin' mo'?

PHIL.

Looking at his desk pad.

No — wait, yes, theah is.

He rummages among the papers on the desk again.

Heah's a list o' six o' the mos' prominent niggahs in the city — what are you grinnin' at?

BARRINGTON.

Nothin', suh. Six o' the mos' prominent niggahs — that's all.

PHIL.

I reckon theah's no reason why a niggah shouldn't be prominent, is theah? Anyway, heah they are, an' I want you t' write askin' 'em t' meet Senatoh Wheelright an' Speakah Evans an' me, heah in my office, t'-morrow at ten.

BARRINGTON.

Taking the list.

A'bstitution with niggahs? I reckon that's a depa'ture!

PHIL.

The mo' a'bstitution, the less riotin' — that's mighty cleah t' me, at any rate!

THE DOORKEEPER.

Appearing.

Senatoh Long, suh, an' he says he has an appointment.

PHIL.

All right.

To Barrington.

Show him in, will you? An' then see we're not distu'bed.

BARRINGTON.

Yes, suh.

He follows the doorkeeper out.

Left to himself, Phil presses his hand slowly over his eyes — a gesture of utter despair and fatigue. He sits this way a moment, motionless. Then, as the doors open again, he removes his hand quickly and rises.

The doorkeeper is seen showing in Senator Thomas R. Long, who is a tall, gaunt, bent man of about fifty or more. He has a weary, furrowed face, deep eyes; he is dressed rather carelessly in a rusty old frock-coat and black trousers, low collar, and small black bow-tie. His hands are brown and big. His whole face lights up when he smiles. He comes forward with an awkward gait to meet Phil, who also advances. They shake hands.

LONG.

Good mawnin', suh. I hope I find you well?

PHIL.

Thanks, Senatoh. I reckon I'm all right.

LONG.

Yo' lookin' so't o' done up, an' I don't wondah !
Now you've ended this trouble, you mus' take
care o' yo'self, suh. Yo' gettin' t' be a heap sight
too impo'tant a man t' play six-handed euchah
with yo' health !

PHIL.

Smiling.

I haven't slept much the las' three nights — an'
then, as you say, I've been conside'able busy in
the day-time. Sit down, Senatoh.

LONG.

Sitting.

No sleep means eithah worryin' like the devil or
fallin' in love. Now yo' in love already, ain't
you? So it mus' be worry. What's the mattah?

PHIL.

I'm well — it's this way, Senatoh.

*During the following he takes a box of cigars from the
desk drawer, gives one to the Senator, and lights it.*

You remembah our talk las' Wednesday night ?

LONG.

I sho'ly do.—

As he takes a cigar and chuckles.

Say, these look mighty rich fo' an ol' man who's smoked nothin' but stogies all his life, but I'll have a try — well?

PHIL.

Well, you tol' me such a lot that I'd nevah hea'd b'fo' — you got me all mixed up. Evah since, I've been goin' round with a whole new set of ideas buzzin' in the back o' my head, an' now that I've got a little time, I want you t' finish.

LONG.

Well, suh, when you tol' me you was goin' t' pass my Prohibition Bill, 'stead o' vetoin' it quicker'n a wink, I was plumb knocked out! 'Cause I always thought you was one o' them nose-in-the-air-niggah-hatahs that —

PHIL.

Interrupting.

I was, Senatoh, an' I reckon I am still. But the riots taught me somethin' was clean wrong with

the system. Prohibition seemed a step in a good direction, an' then — othah things came up — an' — an' — Senatoh, I want t' do the right thing ! Only sometimes it's ha'd t' see jus' what that is ! So I've sent fo' you t' help me, suh, — if you can.

LONG.

Kindly.

What's the trouble, son ?

PHIL.

Not looking at him.

I don't want t' hate the niggahs. I'd like t' feel about 'em the same as you do. But — you see I was bawn an' brought up the othah way, an' somehow I can't shake it off. But these las' three days, I — well, I've felt that if I didn't, somethin' inside o' me would just catch fire an' bu'n me clean up !

LONG.

Judicially.

You ce'tainly need sleep, young man !

PHIL.

It sounds foolish, don't it ? But I always did take responsibility pretty ha'd !

LONG.

All you've got t' do, son, is fall in line. Theah's no good tryin' t' stop a big ocean wave, you know, an' you might jus' as well do that as stan' up against democracy an' humanity an' civilization — an' a lot of othah good things with long names. If you kep' on the way yo' goin', you would ce'-tainly look ridiculous a hundred yeahs from now! So you swim with the wave an' jus' see how fah up the beach it'll take you. Unde'stan'?

PHIL.

But the niggahs — you know how they are! They have theah chance an' then don' take it. They'ah free — they can do what they please —

LONG.

Free — ! Good Lawd ! You can't set free a race o' slaves jus' by knockin' off theah chains ! That's the fi'st step, o' co'se, but the real *wo'k's* got t' come latah.

PHIL.

I reckon you want t' see the niggahs votin' — no, I can't stand fo' that !

LONG.

If ev'ry intelligent niggah had the vote, that means he'd have a right powe'ful lot o' self-respect, too.

PHIL.

Intelligent ! But they'ah not ! They'ah lazy, black beasts — theah's somethin' wrong with theah brains — all they got is a spinal co'd !

LONG.

Dryly.

Eddicate 'em.

PHIL.

A niggah who knows Greek an' spo'ts a fancy waistcoat !

LONG.

Lea'n 'em how t' be fa'mahs an' ca'pentahs an' bricklayahs — I mean them that ain't the brain t' be doctahs an' lawyahs an' preachahs.

PHIL.

An' then who'll be left to plough the fields an' pick the cotton ?

LONG.

Them that's too lazy t' lea'n, suh, — both black an' white. Oh, theah'll be enough, don't you fret yo'self !

PHIL.

But a sma't niggah — that don't know how t' keep his place !

LONG.

It all depends, son, on what his place is — a stall nex' do' t' the hosses, or a two-storied frame house, jus' roun' the co'nah from a chu'ch !

PHIL.

Yo' dead wrong, suh, — but I wish t' God you weren't ! When you come right down to't, the niggah's not a man, he's an animal — he's an African savage — all teeth an' claws — it's monkey blood he's got in him, an' you can't evah change it — no, not in a thousan' yeahs !

LONG.

Earnestly.

Young fellah, don't say wo'ds like them, not even t' yo'self ? They'ah wicked, an' what's mo', they ain't true ! Ev'ry niggah's a man. You

an' me have had mo' time t' push ahead — that's the only diff'rence between us ! We're all men an' we're all doin' the same thing — stumblin' an' fallin' t'gethah, on our jou'ney t' God. So theah's no use sayin' the las' ranks ain't got no business t' go wheah the fi'st are leadin' 'em. I reckon, suh, that ain't square play !

PHIL.

Bitterly.

I wondah — !

LONG.

Smiling.

If it comes t' that, sonny, our own ancestohs used theah tails an' theah feet with a powe'ful degree o' fluency ! But that ain't kept us, 's fah's I can see, from puttin' on all the airs we know how !

PHIL.

As before.

Then it's yo' idea — the niggahs should be treated like equals ?

LONG.

A few — but that's about all ! Nevah mind — give 'em time ! That made us, an' it'll do the same fo' them !

PHIL.

But it don't help much *now* — does it?

LONG.

Cheerfully.

Go 'long, sonny! Why, what'd be the good o' life if you didn't know you were leavin' behind the things you've done? I tell you, we'ah jes' se'vants o' the comin' generations — that's all! They'll enjoy ev'rythin' we've wo'ked an' thought an' suff'd t' give 'em, an' they'll wo'k an' think an' suffah fo' *theah* young folks — an' so it goes. An' *theah* ain't no end!

PHIL.

After a brief pause.

That's — that's a fine idea, Senatoh.

LONG.

'Taint an idea — it's the ol'-fashioned truth! Why, if I couldn't shut my eyes as I sit heah, an' look way off — hundreds an' hundreds o' yeahs — an' see this country o' mine that I've fought fo' all my life holdin' one people — jes' one people

wo'kin' shouldah t' shouldah fo' the common good an' the glory o' God —

As he opens his eyes and smiles.

Well, I reckon ev'ry man has his own private little Heaven, an' seein' as I nevah had a family, thinkin' 'bout that has been mine, fo' ovah fo'ty yeahs !

PHIL.

I'd give a good deal t' see that when I shut *my* eyes !

LONG.

Smiling.

Let me make yo' a present of it, young fellah ! Don't evah fo'get yo' livin' t' make that dream come true. Only it ain't a dream — that's the best pa't of it — it's as real as — as you an' me !

PHIL.

Pause.

It's wonde'ful. —

Pause.

But it seems so't of fah away, don't it ? I mean, the nice pa't. Theah's nothin' now but waitin' an' hopin'.

LONG.

An' wo'kin'. Don't leave that out!

PHIL.

But I want somethin' mo', Senatoh. I want t' get t' the top myself — I want t' see what it's like up theah! I can't jus' wait an' wo'k!

LONG.

Well, I should say fo' a young fellah you had nothin' t' kick about! Gove'noh o' the State, engaged to a right pretty gal, with everythin' —

PHIL.

Interrupting quickly.

I know, Senatoh, I know. But I think a man ought t' carry contentment in his hea't an' in his head — independent o' gove'nohs an' — an' girls, don't you? I reckon it's safah.

LONG.

I reckon it is, sonny.

PHIL.

An' that's why I want t' make up my mind about the niggahs — it's weighin' me down like —

He is unable to go on.

LONG.

Don't let it ! Remembah it's comin' out all right
— soonah or latah — fast or slow !

PHIL.

In inarticulate emotion.

How — ? — Why ?

LONG.

Simply.

When yo' as ol' as me, sonny, you'll b'lieve in a God above us that's a real, sho' thing ! I reckon that God knew what He was doin' when He let us bring the niggahs ovah heah. He knew we'd have t' go through an awful lot b'fo' *that* could be made right, an' I reckon He knew, too, that in the end we'd be a blame sight bettah nation than we evah were b'fo'. Ye know, sonny, that's a way God has. He lets us tu'n the bad into good. Sometimes I think we oughtah thank Him mo' fo' *that* 'n anythin' else.

There is a slight pause.

PHIL.

Half to himself.

Tu'n the bad into good.

To Long.

How could I help do that ?

LONG.

Kindly.

Try an' like the niggahs. That don't mean sayin' they'ah's good as you — it's one to a million they ain't ! But hatin's the ol' way o' gettin' roun' the folks that bothah ye — likin's up-to-date ! So crack a smile, sonny, an' stick out yo' han's, an' all pull t'gethah — top an' bottom — rich an' po' — black an' white ! I reckon that's the trick t' keep this ol' wo'l'd movin' good an' fast !

A pause.

What are ye thinkin' 'bout now ?

PHIL.

Rousing himself.

Nothin'. Only — I reckon I've made up my mind, Senatoh. I reckon yo' right.

LONG.

Then this is the best half-hour's wo'k I've done fo' a powe'ful long time !

PHIL.

Rising and coming to where Long is.

I'm glad you came t' see me, Senatoh. I needed some one t' talk t' me, jus' like you've done.

P'raps it won't be very long befo' you know why.

LONG.

An' now, aftah all my preachin', I want t' tell you how much yo' splendid wo'k in holdin' down the riots has meant t' ev'ry one of us! You sho' have the people back of you now, suh, hea't an' soul!

PHIL.

Oh, I didn't do much!

LONG.

Measuring him with his eyes.

No, yo' the real stuff, suh! We need men like you — and those of us who're black, *they* need you most of all!

There is a pause.

PHIL.

Simply.

May I always count on you as my friend, Senatoh? I should like t' feel sho' you are my friend.

LONG.

Solemnly, after a moment's pause.

I am proud, suh, t' say "Yes."

He offers his hand.

PHIL.

Lowering his head slightly, as he takes it.

Thank you, Senatoh.

Another brief pause, as they shake hands.

LONG.

With a change of tone.

I reckon I won't keep you any mo', suh.

Suddenly.

Whoa up! I've fo'gotten somethin'. Yo' frien's in both Houses, suh, are desirous o' restorin' public confidence fu'thah by havin' you speak t' the troops, not t' mention the assembled citizens, on theah way t' the station!

He has said this gravely, but with a twinkle in his eye.

PHIL.

Smiling.

You mean the Colonel is comin' chaperoned by two regiments.

LONG.

Exactly, suh. Now you think up somethin' t' say — good an' easy, you unde'stand — somethin' that'll clinch the mem'ry o' these fo' days o' crime

an set 'em lookin' in the right direction. It's a great chance, suh, it sho'ly is !

PHIL.

I know — I only wish I had mo' time. It'll be so't o' crude, I reckon, but I'll do my best.

LONG.

Then I'll come back latah with a few gentlemen from the House. The Colonel ought t' tu'n up by fo' thi'ty.

PHIL.

At the door.

All right. You've done a lot fo' me t'-day — more'n you know — jus' now !

LONG.

At the door, turning.

What you got t' remembah, sonny, is that if a man wo'ks ha'd enough an' loves ha'd enough, things can't help bein' all right in the end. Carry that in yo' mental vest pocket, will you? So long.

PHIL.

I'll try.

The Senator goes out.

Phil stands for a moment, thoughtfully, then, rousing himself, goes over to his desk and presses a bell just underneath the edge.

The door opens and the doorkeeper appears.

THE DOORKEEPER.

Yes, suh?

PHIL.

Send in Mr. Noyes, if he's still theah, Cha'lie.

THE DOORKEEPER.

Yes, suh.

He goes out.

Phil rummages among the papers, finds the Long Bill, and, sitting down, begins to go over it, pencil in hand.

Enter Noyes. He is flushed and his manner is one of suppressed nervousness; he has evidently been drinking.

NOYES.

Well, heah I am!

PHIL.

Looking up.

So I see. Sit down, Clif, won't you?

NOYES.

Don't mention it.

He sits down opposite Phil. There is a slight pause.

It's Friday, Phil. You know I said I was comin' back Friday.

PHIL.

Did you, Clif? An' what was it you wanted?

NOYES.

Nervously.

Phil, you've had time t' make up yo' mind. I've given you bushels o' time, you can't deny that!

PHIL.

I don't know as my mind has changed any, Clif, so fah's you go.

Sharply.

Come along, now, what is it?

NOYES.

You know! Are you goin' t' let that Prohibition Bill go through? Or have you come down t'

ea'th again an' decided you'd be a sensible, right-thinkin' man?

PHIL.

Dryly.

I reckon that's what I've always tried t' be, Clif — a sensible, right-thinkin' man!

NOYES.

Dam' it, you know what I mean! This ain't no time fo' laughin' — an' all that!

PHIL.

I'm not laughin', Clif. Somehow I don't feel inclined that way t'-day.

NOYES.

Irritably.

Then why in hell d'you —

PHIL.

Interrupting.

Heah, now, don't you take on so loud! Looks like you've been imbibin' a right powe'ful dose o' yo' own brand, Clif. — I reckon you thought it might be yo' las' chance!

NOYES.

Trying to control himself and laughing nervously.

You always were one fo' the joke, Phil, weren't you? An' I'm blamed if you didn't get a rise out o' me jes' now — you see I've been kind o' anxious ovah all this since Wednesday — it means such a dam' lot t' me, Phil, an' I — o' co'se I knew you'd stand t' reason in the end — I know that all right, but — sometimes a man can't help thinkin' what *would* happen if —

He pauses.

Phil has not moved or responded in any way.

Then, bursting out, he rises in uncontrollable agitation.

What are you goin' t' do about that Bill? That's what I want t' know, an' I want t' know it right now!

PHIL.

Quickly and coolly.

I'm goin' t' let that Bill go through, Clif, I —

NOYES.

No, yo' not!

PHIL.

I'm goin' t' see this State go dry. I said I hadn't changed my mind about you since Wednesday, an' I reckon I haven't!

NOYES.

Have you signed it yet?

PHIL.

That don't make any —

NOYES.

Breaking in

Jes' tell me — have you signed it?

PHIL.

Not yet, but —

NOYES.

Good!

PHIL.

Finishing at last.

But I'm goin' to b'fo' t'-morrow. I only kept it till now so's I could glance ovah it again — fo' the las' time.

NOYES.

Breathing hard.

Well, Phil, t'-morrow's a long ways off. Sometimes it nevah comes at all!

PHIL.

Don't it? I reckon we'll see!

NOYES.

Wait till I've talked to you, Phil, an' then mebbe
you'll —

PHIL.

The Legislature adjou'ns in the afte'noon. The
Long Bill's goin' t' be signed by fo' o'clock !

NOYES.

No, it ain't !

PHIL.

Rising.

So now that yo' on, Clif, go home an' drink up all
the liquoh on the premises ! Get roarin' drunk,
Clif — make the most o' the time that's left !
Then jump into the biggest vat you can find an'
drown yo'self !

NOYES.

Wait a second —

PHIL.

No, I reckon we've finished our little chat, Clif.

NOYES.

Phil, I want you t' listen fo' two minutes !

PHIL.

It won't do a bit o' good —

NOYES.

Jes' two minutes ! Phil, you know who I am an' what I've done. I've built up a big business — I've built it up inch by inch in the face o' the best competition o' the whole dam' country ! I've run it mighty straight, too, considerin' the odds against me, you know that, Phil !

PHIL.

Yes, but I —

NOYES.

Continuing.

An' d'you think I've done it without wo'kin' like hell, yeah in an' yeah out ? I've pushed my body an' my brains, jes' about 's fah 's they could go, ev'ry day o' my life, an' I didn't make no kick about it, neithah — I was gettin' somethin' — I was gettin' a blame lot ! But now — say, how would you feel if you'd been slavin' like a niggah fo' neahly fo'ty yeahs, an' then, when you began coinin' results, have a dam' fool come along an' bust up the whole thing, — jes' b'cause he was sufferin' from a bug in his head he called his conscience ! Say, Phil ! can't you look at it from *my* side o' the fence ?

PHIL.

Seriously.

I'm sorry, Clif, I really am. But then — you know it's not a question o' my feelin' sorry.

NOYES.

Eagerly.

I'd like t' know what else it is! Dam' it, Phil, you can do it fo' me if you only want to!

PHIL.

Shaking his head.

You've got it all wrong, Clif — dead wrong!

NOYES.

Phil, you know you've skun me out o' what was mine by rights — oh, it ain't yo' fault, I realize that! But now's yo' chance t' make it all up t' me!

PHIL.

Gravely.

Don't put it that way, Clif.

NOYES.

Why not? Come on, Phil, I'm yo' kin, an' first an' last we've been treated like di'ty dawgs by

yo' side o' the fam'ly. Come on, an' do the decent thing, Phil !

A slight pause.

Good Lawd ! I don't see why *I* should be the one t' boot-lick — knowin' what I do — an' all that !

PHIL.

Quietly.

You needn't hint, Clif. I haven't fo'gotten.

NOYES.

Wiping away the sweat from his forehead.

Theah ! I ain't hintin'. I'm only askin' you t' be decent t' yo' own kin !

Suddenly, in a paroxysm of emotion.

You don' know what this means ! Ev'ry cent I got is in them distille'ies — you've smashed my papah, an' I nevah said a wo'd about it, did I ? But if my distille'ies go, I'm in a receivah's han's myself — sold up — down an' out — an' I'll be fifty nex' May — that's too ol' t' try again —

PHIL.

Interrupting.

Quit it, Clif, yo' only gettin' wrought up fo' nothin' ! I can't help you — I have my duty an' I see it

mighty plain, an' — well, I got t' do 't. That's all.

NOYES.

Yo' goin' t' finish me, are you?

PHIL.

I'm goin' t' sign that Bill.

NOYES.

Phil, fo' the las' time, won't you listen t' reason?

PHIL.

I'm sorry, Clif, but it's jus' no use!

NOYES.

Slapping his thigh and rising.

All right! You've done it yo'self!

PHIL.

How d'you mean?

NOYES.

I mean that if you don't veto that Prohibition Bill — right now — while I'm watchin' you —

PHIL.

As he pauses.

Well? What'll you do?

NOYES.

I'll go straight from this heah place t' the *Courant* Buildin', an' have 'em publish yo' niggah gran'-mothah's lettah on the front page o' theah evenin' edition.

There is a brief pause.

PHIL.

With a slight smile.

That's soonah 'n I'd expected, Clif.

NOYES.

An' I'll have an editorial t'-morrow tellin' the people o' this State jest why theah Gove'noh wants 'em t' go dry! When he was a white man, he was all fo' the whites — now that he's black, he's down on 'em like hell! Do you know what's makin' you pass this Bill? It's race feelin' — ye dam' niggah ye!

Phil, during this, has seated himself quietly at his desk and written something quickly. Now he rises and points to it.

PHIL.

That Bill's a law now.

NOYES.

Choking.

You —

PHIL.

That Bill's a law. Now cleah out !

NOYES.

You've done it ?

PHIL.

Cleah out, I say !

NOYES

Beside himself.

Ye dam' fool —

He springs forward to snatch away the Bill.

Phil, very quickly, has pressed the button and is holding the Bill beyond his reach when doorkeeper appears.

THE DOORKEEPER.

Yes, suh ?

PHIL.

Give this to Mr. Barrington, please. Tell him t' put it in the safe an' then come heah.

He hands him the Bill.

THE DOORKEEPER.

All right, suh.

The doorkeeper goes out, carrying the Bill.

NOYES.

With a shaky laugh.

Well, you ce'tainly have fixed yo'self this trip !

PHIL.

If yo' not gone by the time Barrington comes, I'll ring fo' the plain-clothes men. Unde'stand ?

NOYES.

Insolently.

Oh, I'll be gone all right ! I gottah hurry t' get theah befo' the papah goes t' press. So you think you've done me, don't you ?

A pause. Phil, seated at the desk, does not answer.

I reckon, though, you've done yo'self, an' what's mo', you've made me tol'able well off fo' the rest o' my life.

PHIL.

Easily.

Yes ?

NOYES.

Grinning at him in rage and triumph.

Knocked out my business, have you? Well, what of it, you sma't Aleck? Say, give us the size o' yo' income, will yo? Twenty — twenty-five thousan'? Is it all in cotton? Ain't you got any good bonds? No? Well, aftah all, cotton's safe! You see I'm int'rested, 'cause it's *my* income, now!

PHIL.

Calmly.

I know that

NOYES.

All yo' property, yo' plantation, yo' town house, "Morrow's Rest" — with the fam'ly po'traits in the dinin'-room an' yo' precious ol' gran'pa's swo'd hangin' up on the library wall — they b'long t' me now, they have evah since he got killed down in Mexico —

PHIL.

Warningly.

We won't talk 'bout him, Clif!

NOYES.

They'ah mine now! They've been long enough in the han's o' black basta'ds like you an' yo' dad —

PHIL.

Furious.

Take that back, you —

NOYES.

Laughing.

I see myself, ye dam' young mulatto, ye —

Phil rises and comes for Noyes, his hands clenched.

Barrington enters.

BARRINGTON.

Pleasantly, as he turns to close the doors.

Cha'lie says you wanted me, suh. The Long Bill's in the safe all right.

PHIL.

Stopping.

Yes, I — wait a second, while I think —

BARRINGTON.

Crossing to Phil.

Miss Byrd, suh, is in my office, wantin' t' see you.

PHIL.

Miss Byrd — ? Why — when did she come ?

BARRINGTON.

Only 'bout ten minutes ago.

Glancing at Noyes.

I didn't think you'd like t' be distu'bed, suh. She said it was impo'tant, so I asked her t' wait.

PHIL.

Collecting himself.

That's right. Yes — yes, I'll see her now.

As Barrington looks again at Noyes.

Mr. Noyes is leavin' immediately.

NOYES.

Picking up his hat and stick, after looking at his watch.

Ten aftah fo'. I reckon I gottah hustle—they'ah in press at five.

PHIL.

Coolly.

Good luck !

NOYES.

Ostentatiously putting on his gloves.

'Membah me t' Miss Geo'gie, won't you? By the way, when does the happy ce'emony come off? Thought I hea'd somethin' 'bout next month. That so?

He pauses, then laughs again.

Well, s'long, Phil, ol' man! Pa'don me if I don't shake han's.

BARRINGTON.

Annoyed at the evident insult in his manner.

A touch o' gout, is it? P'raps you've been samplin' yo' own goods a little too freely, Mr. Noyes. Now I don't like to suggest, but they do say life at the Keeley Cure is very pleasant indeed!

NOYES.

Still looking at Phil.

No, it's not that, young fellah — it's a touch of — ol' Southe'n prejudice, I reckon. That's all.

He goes out.

Phil, during this last, has faced him silently, unmoved.

BARRINGTON.

At the door, before following him.

You ce'tainly must have made it hot fo' him, suh !
He looks like a fricasseed guinea-hen befo' they
po' on the gravy !

PHIL.

Ask Miss Byrd kindly t' step in heah, Barrington,
will you ?

BARRINGTON.

Very well, suh.

He goes out.

*Phil crosses to the fireplace and stands for a moment,
leaning his arms on the mantel. He somehow expresses
nervous conflict. At the entrance of the girl he turns
quickly, and it is seen that his poise is regained.
During the following scene his manner is quiet and
tender and manly.*

*Georgie enters hesitatingly. She wears a simple after-
noon frock ; her face is pale.*

PHIL.

Turning.

How d'you do ? It was — very nice of you t'
come t' see me.

GEORGIE.

Holding out her hand.

I've tried befo'. Yeste'day I came t' the house twice.

PHIL.

I was out wo'kin' with the troops. But Simms didn't tell me —

GEORGIE.

Interrupting.

I asked him not to. I wanted t' tell you myself. So this afte'noon I jus' couldn't stand it any longah an' I made mothah bring me heah.

PHIL.

Gravely.

Have you said anythin' t' yo' mothah?

GEORGIE.

Nervously.

Said what?

PHIL.

After a moment of hesitation.

That we've broken our engagement?

GEORGIE.

Not looking at him.

No.

PHIL.

Then I reckon you'd bettah do it right away. Things are goin' t' happen, Geo'gie, an' I want you out of it befo' the trouble commences.

GEORGIE.

I'm not going to tell mothah, Phil.

PHIL.

Do you — want *me* to? Is that it?

GEORGIE.

I'm not going to tell her our engagement's off, fo' the simple reason that it isn't. Theah now!

PHIL.

What d'you mean?

GEORGIE.

Bursting out.

I don't care — I love you, Phil! Oh, I know what you think of me fo' going back on you that way!

And yo' pe'factly right, Phil, I dese've it all —
ev'ry bit of it, but —

PHIL.

Geo'gie — !

GEORGIE.

Going on.

I was so — so — you see I didn't expect it, and then I hadn't been sleeping on account o' the riots — it wasn't me that talked that way, Phil, it was jus' my tired ne'ves — an' — since then — well, o' co'se I woke up and I've been thinking and feeling, and — I don't know, I jus' love you so much, Phil, that I won't let anything come between us — not even — *that!*

PHIL.

Almost overcome.

Geo'gie — yo' the kind o' girl I — well, I reckon theah not two of you in the whole wo'l'd ! I'm proud t' be in love with a girl like you, Geo'gie !

GEORGIE.

So you'll fo'give me, won't you ? An' you'll fo'get all those dreadful things I said — an' we'll go on jus' as if nothing had happened — that's it, jus' as if nothing had evah happened !

PHIL.

Yo' willin' t' do that — fo' me ?

GEORGIE.

With a trembling smile, as she moves forward, her arms open.

Phil deah, I can't help it — why, I've known you and I've loved you all my life !

PHIL.

Controlling an impulse to take her in his arms.

Wait a second, honey ! I nevah knew myself till these three days ! But durin' that time — (*with a big breath*) — well, I've gone down pretty fah, an' I reckon now I've touched bottom at last !

GEORGIE.

Why — Phil — I — what is it ?

PHIL.

Sit down, honey, heah on the sofa, so we can talk an' you can be right comf'table.

As she does so.

Theah !

GEORGIE.

Suddenly.

You haven't kissed me yet — you haven't fo'given me — *Phil!* You don't mean you —

PHIL.

Patiently.

Wait a second, deah. When I told you I couldn't give you up an' if you only didn't mind we could go on 's if nothin' had happened, I reckon I was doin' somethin' mighty low down.

GEORGIE.

I don't unde'stand.

PHIL.

I was sayin' somethin' I knew in my hea't wasn't so.

GEORGIE.

Phil !

PHIL.

That's true as Gospel, honey ! It would be mighty nice if we could smash up things as they are an' make 'em all ovah, jus' like we wanted 'em — mighty nice ! But we can't !

GEORGIE.

Yes, we can — and we're going to, Phil !

PHIL.

Half smiling.

If I could be bawn again — then p'raps I —

GEORGIE.

Interrupting.

But, Phil — it's — it's only such a *little!* Just a trace — that's all !

PHIL.

Gently.

Black's black, an' white's white. If yo' not one, yo' the othah, Geo'gie. I've always said that, an' I reckon I'll have t' stick to't now !

GEORGIE.

But it's so diff'rent — you didn't know then — yo' not responsible fo' what you said !

PHIL.

My mind hasn't changed, deah, on that pa'ticulah point. An' even if it had, d'you think folks

would let me keep on bein' — a white man — any mo'?

There is a pause. She stares at him in horror and amazement.

GEORGIE.

Yo' not going to *tell* people! No, Phil,— you couldn't — you simply couldn't!

PHIL.

Calmly.

That's jus' what I've got t' do.

GEORGIE.

Tell every one — ? Oh, yo' not — I won't let you!

PHIL.

I reckon neithah of us can keep it da'k any mo', even if we wanted t' try. Clif Noyes was heah befo' you came.

GEORGIE.

I know. Well?

PHIL.

Well, he wanted me t' veto the Long Bill an' I tol' him I wasn't goin' to. So he left fo' the office

o' the *Courant* an' he's goin' t' bring out the whole thing in t'-night's papah.

A slight pause. Then, with an odd little smile.

They might even think I was wo'th an extra !

GEORGIE.

Mr. Noyes — ! And he has some lettahs — !
Oh — !

She clenches her hands.

PHIL.

I reckon he'll give me a mighty neat headline !

GEORGIE.

Flaming.

That man — ! Phil, why didn't you shoot him like a yallah dog — why did you let him get by you alive ?

PHIL.

Soothingly.

Honey, what does it mattah about Clif ? I might 'a' killed him, like you say, but I couldn't 'a' killed a plain, bare fact, that happened ovah fifty yeahs ago, could I ?

GEORGIE

But the *Courant!* I can see those headlines now—
it's such a di'ty way, Phil !

PHIL.

Dryly.

Well, the business itself isn't so powe'ful clean,
Geo'gie ! But I'm goin' t' do my best t' shine it
up ! Senatoh Long tells me they want a little
speech when the troops come with the Colonel on
theah way t' the train. They'll be along heah
right soon now, with a big crowd, I reckon. An'—
well, it looks like my chance !

GEORGIE.

Staring at him.

You mean — ?

PHIL.

My chance t' tell ev'rybody myself. I don't
fancy the idea of the *Courant* doin' it fo' me.

GEORGIE.

Yo' going to stand up an' say — a thing like that
— befo' the whole city ?

PHIL.

Why not?

GEORGIE.

Aghast.

Oh, you mustn't — you mustn't ! I know theah's some way t' stop Mr. Noyes — let *me* see him —

PHIL.

I reckon that wouldn't do a mite o' good, honey !

GEORGIE.

But, Phil, — it'll be the end of you — !

PHIL.

In a flash of tortured resolution.

Don't I know that ?

More gently.

Oh, I've thought it all out, honey, 'deed I have ! I'm a-goin' t' send in my resignation t'-mor'-row, befo' the Senate adjou'ns.

There is a little pause.

GEORGIE.

Her voice shaking.

I unde'stand now — and — it's splendid — Oh, I didn't know *any one* could be as splendid as that !

PHIL.

Trying to smile.

Nonsense, Geo'gie — but now you see why we can't go on 's if nothin' had happened — why I'm sayin' good-by to you.

GEORGIE.

In wonder.

Good-by?

PHIL.

Yes, I don't want t' see you — not fo' a long time — I'm not sho' if I evah want t' see you again — !

GEORGIE.

But why?

PHIL.

His passion and grief breaking out in spite of himself.

Why — ? Good God, Geo'gie, even if I am a niggah, can't you see I'm a man — ?

He turns suddenly away.

GEORGIE.

Listing her head, after a pause.

Yes, o' co'se I do. And I see I'm a woman, too,

and that we're going to get married right away.
I see all three things mighty cleah !

PHIL.

Turning to her.

Geo'gie, d'you realize that in less'n an hour I'm
goin' t' stand at this heah window an' say right out
t' the Ame'ican nation that I'm a niggah ?

GEORGIE.

Interrupting.

Yes, I realize that. What of it ?

PHIL.

I reckon you don't unde'stand — !

GEORGIE.

Coming to him, her hands on his arms

No, perhaps I don't, Phil! Theah's only one thing
I know I unde'stand and that is — I love you —

He makes a movement to turn away.

Yes, I love you — I don't care who you are or
what you do — I don't care if ev'rybody in the
wo'l'd goes back on you, I'll stick all the closah,
you can't get rid of me —

PHIL.

No, don't —

GEORGIE.

Swept on.

An' you'll need me — you'll need ev'ry bit of the help I'm going to give you !

Her voice breaking.

Why, Phil deah, I think I'm almost glad you've got to go through this, because theah'll be so much I can do fo' you — and I will do it, too ! I'll have to make up to you fo' everything you've lost — and, oh ! honey, I know I can ! I know I can !

PHIL.

Quit it, Geo'gie !

GEORGIE.

Clinging to him.

You've made me love you — it's yo' own fault, way back theah — yeahs ago ! And you can't stop me now — it isn't right and it isn't fair to try !

PHIL.

Turning to her with a distorted smile.

Love — a niggah — ?

GEORGIE.

Flinging her arms about his neck.

My boy — my own boy — !

PHIL.

With a cry, pressing her to him violently.

Geo'gie — you mustn't — you mustn't —

He kisses her again and again. Then, pushing her away suddenly.

No — I won't let you — this has got t' quit right
heah —

GEORGIE.

In despair.

Phil — !

PHIL.

It can't be that way — no, it nevah can, an' I'll
tell you why !

Controlling himself.

Befo' all this happened, I was tryin' t' do what I
could with my life — an' now, when I find things
have changed — well, theah's no good makin'
a fuss — I've got t' do my best with what's left.

GEORGIE.

I know, deah, and it'll be all right. We'll go No'th and be married up theah. You'll begin all ovah again — you'll change yo' name — go into politics —

PHIL.

Interrupting.

No, that won't do. Senatoh Long showed me the way — he didn't know it, but he did. It's the only one that's open t' me — I couldn't take any othah if I wanted. I've got to wo'k fo' the niggahs — shouldah t' shouldah — b'cause I'm a niggah myself, an' b'cause they need me awful bad !

GEORGIE.

I don't care — I can follow you — and help you —

PHIL.

You? Yo' white — that keeps you out. You can't ride with me on the niggah trolleys — you can't stop with me at the niggah hotels — you can't eat with me at the niggah lunch-countahs — you can't be buried with me in a niggah grave-ya'd —

GEORGIE.

In agony.

No, no — it's not that way —

PHIL.

Yes, it is ! Geo'gie, theah's a black gulf between us — an' it's filled t' the brim with sweat an' hate an' blood ! We can stretch out our hands from eithah side, but they won't meet ! An' even while we're tryin', don't we heah from down theah — miles down — comin' up through the centuries — the crack of a white man's whip an' the scream of a —

GEORGIE.

Interrupting, terrified.

Phil — don't — don't, fo' Heaven's sake !

PHIL.

Pulling himself together with a great effort, and smiling.

Love can do a lot, honey. No one knows that better'n me. But it can't bring us two t'gethah — any mo'.

GEORGIE.

Not even if we waited — a long, long time ?

PHIL.

Smiling.

I reckon it would be jus' about's long as we happened t' live, honey ! An' then — (*slight pause*) — well, I wish fo' the fi'st time that I was a religious man ! I'd know I'd meet you beyond the Jo'dan — as mammy says — an' I don't doubt fo' a minute that helps a powe'ful lot !

GEORGIE.

I won't let you leave me, Phil — you've got to take me with you !

PHIL.

Tenderly.

I wish I could, honey, but it looks as if I'd have t' go alone. You see, what my gran'fathah did t' my gran'mothah isn't all — it's what ev'ry white man has done t' ev'ry niggah fo' the las' three hundred yeahs ! An' it's time some one had to pay up, even if he wasn't extra keen on bein' the pa'tic-
ulah chosen man.

GEORGIE.

But it's not fair t' make you suffah fo' what yo' gran'fathah did ! You've got a duty to yo'self — you've got yo' own life t' lead !

PHIL.

Gently.

I know, honey. An' now let me tell you somethin' that makes it seem easiah. The Senatoh said a heap o' things, an' they all hit me mighty ha'd, but this — well, I felt I'd bettah have it my motto from now on — like one o' those "Do-It-Now" signs some fellahs tack up ovah theah desks. Unde'stand?

GEORGIE.

What is it?

PHIL.

I can't boil it down into three wo'ds yet, but I got the idea all right. Heah it is. We're livin' in a wo'l'd wheah a lot o' good things happen an' a lot o' bad things, too. We don't exactly know what makes 'em do 't, but mos' people gene'ally agree theah is somethin' back of it all, though they call it by a heap o' different names. Well, this fo'ce must be movin' us towa'ds somethin' good or somethin' bad — it's not standin' still. Some say it's headed fo' destruction, but *he* says it's goin' t' bring us all out on top, if we only wait long enough an' wo'k ha'd enough an' don't ask too many questions. But then why do we have

S

t' go through such an awful lot on the road? I reckon it's b'cause a man is constructed so blame queah, he can't be really happy 'nless he's known the other thing, too. D'you think we'd be 'specially grateful fo' good weathah, if the sun kep' shinin' all the time? I have my doubts!

GEORGIE.

But what's this got t' do with you?

PHIL.

I'm a-comin' t' that, honey. Well, heah is our Ame'ican people an' they've done a big, wrong thing — stealin' the niggahs from Africa an' bringin' 'em ovah heah fo' theah own selfish use — an' a thing like that couldn't help endin' — as it *has* ended — in bloody to'ment! We're a-sufferin' it now, but d'you think it's goin' t' last? D'you think we're not a-goin' t' rise up from it a strongah an' a wisah an' a kindah people? D'you think it's not wo'th while — all this? Why, if it weren't, — a thousand times ovah! — what would be the use o' strugglin' an' livin' any longah? Why shouldn't ev'ry one get rid of it all by takin' a headah right into the da'k?

GEORGIE.

Seeing his drift.

Oh — Phil !

PHIL.

An' it's jus' the same, on a littlah scale, with me. My gran'fathah did somethin' wrong, an' it's resultin' in mighty seveah pain fo' ev'ry one conce'ned. But aftah this pain's been used — fo' it *has* a use, an' a good one, too ! — why, we'll get the fruits o' the whole experience, an' I reckon they'll make up fo' ev'rythin' !

Inherited Curse
fasten

GEORGIE.

Protesting.

But, Phil, I —

PHIL.

Silencing her.

My deah, we've *got* t' b'lieve it whethah we want to or not — theah's nothin' left fo' us t' do ! The final good — that's what it is, the final good ! An' we won't let anythin' keep us from gettin' to it !

GEORGIE.

Quietly.

Not even — me ?

PHIL.

Looking at her.

Honey, I didn't mean to —

GEORGIE.

Interrupting.

But you've left me out of it. I can suffah, like I'm sufferin' now, but what use will it be t' any one?

PHIL.

Very tenderly.

Yo's is the ha'dest, I know. I've got wo'k ahead of me — lots of it, thank God! But you must sit with yo' han's folded — mo' or less — an' that's why I'm so —

He bends his head, unable to continue.

GEORGIE.

It's all wrong, Phil — I know that!

PHIL.

Very tenderly.

Can't you see, Geo'gie? If you hadn't come this mawnin', I'd have gone to that window like a criminal dragged t' the gallows-tree. But

now when you say, "I love you, an' 'cause I love you, I want you to do the right thing, no mattah what it costs"—why, I'll lift my head an' ma'ch out theah like a captain t' the battlefield. An' honey—you'll have given me my swo'd!

A slight pause.

GEORGIE.

Desperately.

But, Phil, I'm not big like you ! I can't look ahead — I'm not built that way ! I'm jus' an o'dinary girl and I love you and I've got t' have you !

She breaks down and cries.

Phil, I can't let you go — oh, I can't — I *can't* !

PHIL.

Taking her in his arms as he would a child and petting her.

Theah, honey, you mustn't cry ! Think how it makes me feel t' have you cry !

GEORGIE.

Putting her arms about his neck, as if for protection.

I love you —

PHIL.

I know it, deah, an' I reckon theah comes a time in the lives of ev'ry two people when they need each othah's help, an' they need it mighty bad ! This is ours, honey, an' yo' goin' t' help me by bein' brave. I — I reckon I haven't got so much courage that it'll do fo' both of us !

He tries to smile down at her.

GEORGIE.

Struggling with herself.

Wait — I —

PHIL.

Very tenderly

Won't you try, Geo'gie, jus' fo' me — ?

There is a pause.

GEORGIE.

Trying to control herself.

You'll always love me ? I want you to say that.

PHIL.

Yes — (*a little pause*) yes.

GEORGIE.

Always — till the very end ?

PHIL.

Till the very end.

GEORGIE.

I don't unde'stand, Phil.

With complete confidence.

But somehow you've made me feel I'm wrong —
an' that it's all right.

PHIL.

Simply.

That's so, Geo'gie. Everythin' that's gone befo'
an' everythin' that's comin' aftah.

GEORGIE.

An' all through yo' life, Phil, you'll feel me beside
you — helpin' — and lovin' —

PHIL.

Honey — ! An' now I reckon it's good-by.

GEORGIE.

Good-by, Phil — an' God bless you !

She releases herself, and turns blindly away. But he holds her hands in both of his and kisses them gravely.

PHIL.

Looking up brightly after a little pause.

Smile, Geo'gie, I want t' see you smilin' — !

As she smiles bravely back at him.

Theah ! That's the ticket ! Keep it up, honey, an' remembah — it's all right — it's comin' out all right !

They stand, holding one another's hands, smiling into one another's eyes.

Just here, Barrington comes gayly in.

BARRINGTON.

Seeing them.

Hope I'm not interruptin' *too* much, suh, but the Colonel's come. The troops'll be heah in a jiffy, an' yo' goin' t' draw a big crowd, too. Got yo' address down cold, suh ?

To Georgie.

The Gove'noh makes mighty fine impromptu speeches, Miss Byrd, — if you only give him from fo' days to a week's notice. Evah hea'd him hand one out ?

GEORGIE.

I'm going to, this time.

PHIL.

Who has been at the window.

You might ask 'em all t' come in, Barrington.

BARRINGTON.

All right, suh.

He goes to the door.

If you will come this way, gen'lemen —

He lets them pass.

Mrs. Byrd comes in, followed by Colonel Knapp, in dress uniform, Major Salters, Senator Long, with four or five other members of the Legislature, finally, three reporters.

PHIL.

Greeting them.

Glad t' see you, Mrs. Byrd.

MRS. BYRD.

Oh, I wouldn't have missed it fo' anything !

She crosses to where Georgie is standing.

PHIL.

With brilliant assurance.

Colonel, I am sorry yo' leavin' us, tho' I want t'

congratulate you on havin' made yo' presence unnecessary in so sho't a time !

To Major Salters.

Major —

To Long.

I'm glad you came, Senatoh — mighty glad !

He bows and shakes hands with all of them.

THE COLONEL.

Rather pompously.

Yo' Excellency, I feel bound t' say that my officahs an' men could nevah have accomplished theah duty with such expedition, had it not been fo' yo' invaluable good sense an' yo' untirin' ene'gy !

BARRINGTON.

Irrepressibly, as he smiles.

Heah — heah !

THE COLONEL.

Going on.

I am glad, yo' Excellency, that our State, whom all of us love so truly, an' our Country, whom we reve'ence so deeply, have profited an' will continue t' profit by the effo'ts of men like yo'self.

PHIL.

Smiling politely.

I'm sho', Colonel, I don't —

THE COLONEL.

I am grateful, yo' Excellency, that I have been brought, durin' these las' few days, into so close a contact with a son of whom our South is proud — towa'ds whom, I may say, she looks fo' strength an' guidance — in sho't, yo' Excellency, the Comin' Man !

He stops, looks around for approval, and then shakes hands with Phil effusively.

PHIL.

Shaking hands.

Yo' very good, Colonel — very good, I'm sho'.

Meanwhile a polite ripple of applause has run through the room, and the reporters have taken down every word of the Colonel's speech. During this, there has come up from below the noise of the gathering crowd, the "Stand back theah!" "Cleah the road!" etc., etc., of the policemen. As the Colonel finishes there rises a confused noise of welcome as the troops arrive. Short, quick commands are faintly heard from below as the troops fall into battalion ranks.

THE COLONEL.

At one window.

The Battalion has fallen into line. May I ask if yo' Excellency is prepa'ed t' say a few info'mal wo'ds t' the regiments an' the assembled citizens?

PHIL.

O' co'se, Colonel, if ev'ry one's ready out theah.

To Georgie, as he passes her.

Yo' quite sho' — you feel like stayin'?

GEORGIE

In a low, clear voice.

Yes — I want to stay. I want you to feel me back
of you ev'ry minute yo' talkin' —

PHIL.

Simply.

Thank you.

He goes to the centre window and steps outside on the narrow iron balcony. The afternoon sun strikes his figure. At his appearance, a shout goes up — long, steady, enthusiastic cheering; and, after a moment, the big regimental band begins playing, very slowly, "My Country, 'tis of Thee." Phil stands

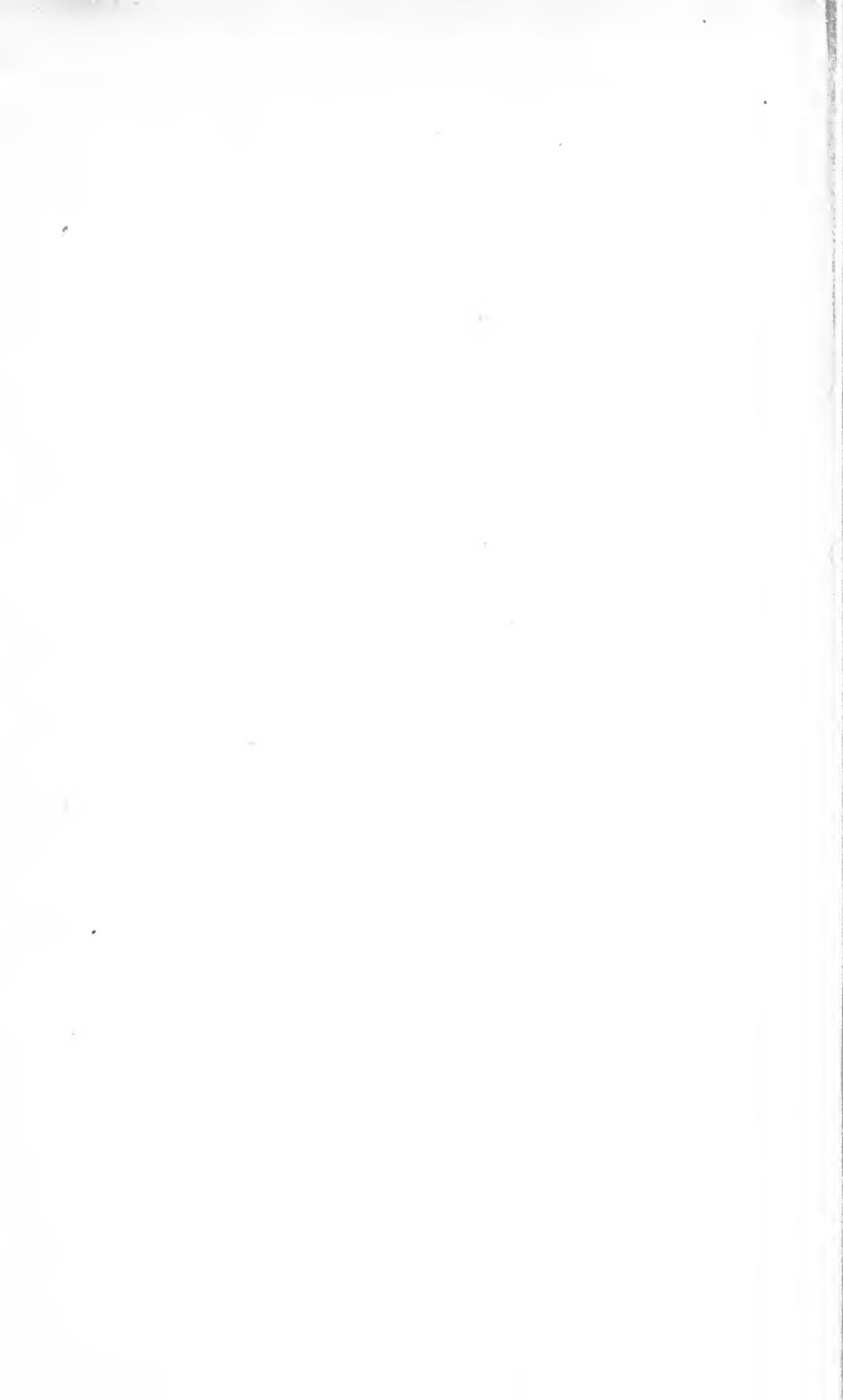
gravely and quietly, occasionally making slight bows to right and left.

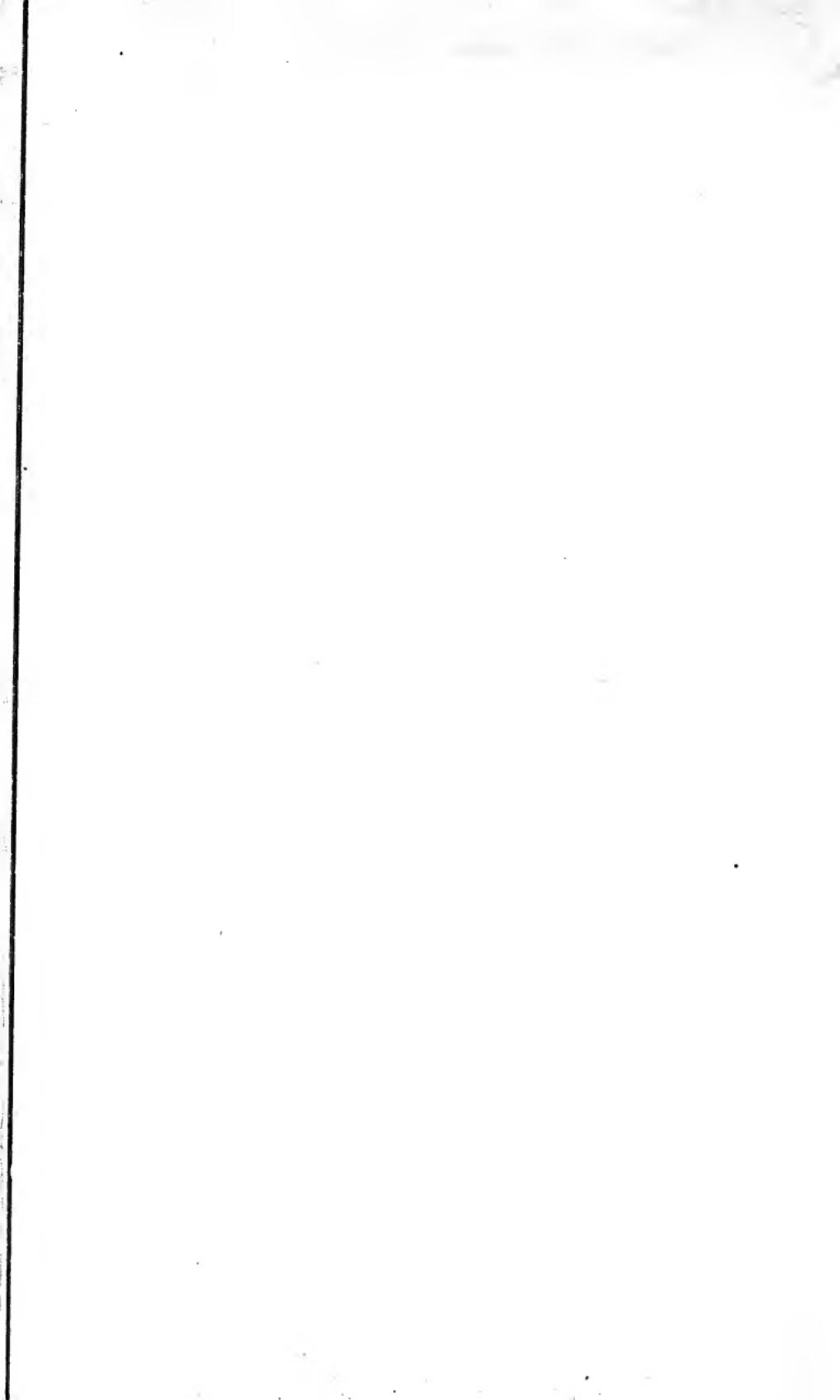
Georgie steps forward a little, her lips parted, her hands clasped uncontrollably at her breast.

All the people in the room are smiling and applauding enthusiastically; and,—as Phil in vain raises his hand for silence and the band crashes through the national anthem and the roar of voices still rises from below —

THE CURTAIN FALLS.







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